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By THE SAME AUTHOR

Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners

Epics, Myths and Legends of India

Kama Kalpa: The Hindu Ritual of Love

The Story of the Cultural Empire of India

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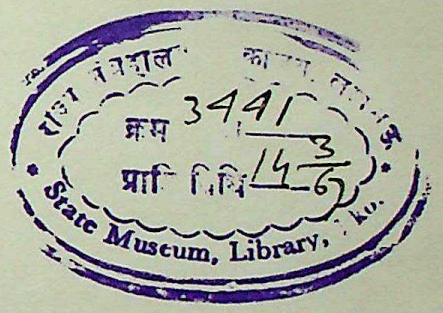

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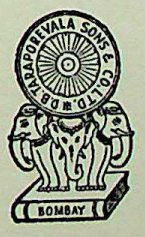

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Preface

I have written several books on India, but in none of them have I dealt, in detail, with certain secret arts and cults for which India has been known from time immemorial. In fact, when my book *Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners* was first published, some readers did point this out to me; while I could appreciate the force of their arguments, I did not make any effort to add the subjects in the subsequent editions of the book, as I felt a separate volume would be necessary to do full justice to the hidden cults and lore of India.

For well over a decade now, I have been collecting material for this book. The difficulties in getting reliable information on secret cults and practices are obvious, as published works are few. There are certain jealously guarded manuscripts of obscure origin and doubtful authenticity in the possession of families traditionally practising secret sciences, but for first-hand information, I had to work my way into the confidence of regular practitioners of sorcery and allied arts, both the primitive and the sophisticated Brahmanic type. The work has involved a good deal of travel, and an objective study of the methods employed by sorcerers, omen-readers and dream interpreters, as well as of popular credulity, and in some cases I had to offer monetary inducements to the impecunious to divulge their secrets. For, as in the more open forms of religion, in sorcery and secret cults too, economic factors often vitiate the spiritual.

Well, from study, personal observation and even participation, I managed to collect a vast body of information on the secret arts and cults of India, and when it came to the actual writing of the book, my difficulty was not scarcity of material but an overabundance of it which had to be compressed into a convenient volume. The material at my disposal on primitive magic alone could fill a volume, and the sophisticated Mantra Sastra, another, to say nothing of dream-interpretation, omen-reading and Tantric religion each of which would, again, need a volume. Further, to make some of the prevailing practices intelligible to the reader, I found it necessary to give their historical background too.

All told, I had to leave out much of the material I collected and present the book to the reader in the form he now sees.

Some of the terror and sex cults of India will appear strange to readers brought up in the Christian tradition. But it must be remembered that while Christianity had actively suppressed and even eliminated by violence some of the ancient religious practices of peoples brought under its influence, Brahminism had allowed them to grow in their own way, leaving it to time to eliminate the non-essential. But Time's mill grinds slowly, and many practices of the ancient world that have died out in regions dominated by Christianity and Islam, have survived in India. I must, however, warn the reader that this book deals only with the hidden aspects of Indian life, and those who wish to get a balanced, over-all picture of the Indian way of life are recommended to read my other works too, particularly,

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Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners and *The Story of the Cultural Empire of India.*

The quotations appearing in the book from published works are mainly for the purpose of authenticating prevailing practices, some of which, in the absence of authority, may appear incredible to lay readers. A list of the books I have consulted or from which I have quoted, is given in the appended Bibliography. Readers seeking advanced information on the Tantric cult will find *Tantrik Texts*, edited by Arthur Avalon, instructive, but in most cases texts, for obvious reasons, are given in Sanskrit.

I am indebted to a large number of friends who have given me first-hand information about the practices of sorcerers and Mantrins and have even allowed me to witness certain secret rites, but they prefer to remain anonymous. I must, however, acknowledge with gratitude the help I had received from the late Mr. Jal Hirji Taraporevala who had taken a keen interest in the work and its progress, Dr. R. J. Mehta who carefully went through the manuscript and gave me valuable suggestions, Mr. D. N. Marshall, Librarian, and B. Anderson, Assistant Librarian, of the Bombay University Library, who gave me free access to the reference works in the Library, and Mr. N. Ramakrishna who supplied a number of photographs.

East Fort, Trichur. P. THOMAS

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PART ONE

SORCERY AND TERROR CULTS

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1. *Indian Conceptions of the Spirit World and Allied Planes*

THE PRACTICE of sorcery and allied arts in India is closely associated with the widespread belief that spirits can, and do, interfere with human activities. To the average Indian, the spirit world is almost as real as the visible world, and he lives in an intimacy with it which is difficult for a Westerner to understand. All Indian religions support the belief in the spirit world, and recognize the existence of various classes of spirits, good and bad, of celestials and demons of varied proclivities who move about the terrestrial plane, haunting, aiding or obstructing human beings in their daily life; they further teach that these mysterious beings can be controlled, that their activities can be neutralised and that they can be scared or lured by means of magic and ritual. In many Indian villages even now, sickness is generally believed to be caused by offended or malignant spirits, and very often, the first person consulted in case of illness is the village sorcerer; Ayurveda, the Indian system of medicine, also maintains that certain maladies are caused by the working of spirits, and when Ayurvedic physicians are consulted in such cases, they refer the patient to a sorcerer.

Such beliefs are not, however, peculiar to India. All religions, as a rule, teach that there are planes, other than terrestrial, inhabited by beings that are able to help or hinder men in their spiritual and material aspirations. In Christian theology, for instance, saints and angels are conceived as constantly helping and the devil persistently trying to ruin man. The prayers for rain, for long life, for the cure of the sick, for immortality, for frustrating the designs of the wicked, etc., are all manifestations of a universal belief in the existence of a mysterious world, the invisible denizens of which are able to help human beings in all their needs, whether of the body or of the soul.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between Christian and Hindu beliefs concerning the inhabitants of non-terrestrial planes. While angels and devils are considered immortal, the gods, demons and various other classes of spirits as conceived in Hinduism are subject to the law of decay and dissolution; they have their appointed span of life, and many other things in common with man. They (even gods and demons) are neither totally evil nor solely good; gods have their moods and weak moments, and the demons are at times capable of generous impulses; all are free agents and have volition. Though endowed with subtle bodies that make them invisible to man, they have their appetites, must have food and drink and must satisfy their sexual urge; their essences or souls are of the same essence as that of men and they differ only in the make-up of their bodies which

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are much more subtle than those of men. Above all, they are, like humans, subject to the inexorable Law of Karma, and have, as their ultimate object, liberation from the tortuous cycle of births and deaths. What brings them into being is the same force of Karma that brings man into being.

WORLD CYCLES

The idea of a personal God, an Almighty Creator, who brought forth the world into being out of nothing and will dissolve it into nothing at His pleasure, is foreign to the spirit of Indian religions. This does not, however, preclude the belief in creation of a sort. For the Hindus do believe that this world of ours was created by god Brahma some 4,319,573,000 years ago. But he did not bring it forth out of nothing; as a matter of fact, he has no such powers and is himself subject to the Law of Karma which will see him dead when his span of life will be over. What is meant by the word "creation" here is that Brahma gave the world form and momentum; in other words, he merely created an atmosphere for the growth of various creatures that were existent in nucleus forms in the chaos that preceded creation. The *Vishnu Purana* is quite clear on this point: "In the matter of creation Brahma is an instrument only, as the force resident in the things created being the principal cause. Being ripe for development, objects in their appointed time take form and substance and attain their maturity by virtue of the force inherent in them." The idea becomes clearer when we consider the fact that a man, though in a way responsible for the birth of his children, cannot be said to be their creator.

Brahma's span of life is 100 divine years, a day of which, known as the Kalpa, is equivalent to 4,320,000,000 years according to human reckoning. The Kalpa is divided into 1000 Maha Yugas (great ages) of equal length, each consisting of four Yugas or ages, namely, Krita or Sat, Threta, Dwapara, and Kali.*

Krita Yuga lasted 1,728,000 years; it was the Golden Age of the Hindus. This was an age of all good and no evil; men were long-lived, always acted rightly and were almost perfect. Evil began to appear in Threta Yuga, the duration of which was 1,296,000 years; yet in this age virtue predominated in the world. In Dwapara Yuga virtue diminished by half; it lasted 864,000 years and towards its end evil predominated in the world and ushered in Kali Yuga, the age we live in. Our lot is sweat, toil and strife; evil pervades everything in this world; towards the end of Kali Yuga wickedness will so prevail that there will be no possibility of continuing the existence of this miserable world, and its end will be hastened by divine intervention. The duration of Kali Yuga is 432,000 years.

On the destruction of our present world, a new world will be created by Brahma, which will start with Krita Yuga, degenerate into Kali Yuga, and eventually perish. Thus the Maha Yugas follow one another till the end of a Kalpa when the night of Brahma starts and the deity goes to sleep, engulfing the universe in Pralaya or chaos. When Brahma wakes up in the morning, order is restored and creation starts again. Thus the eventful days and nights of Brahma repeat themselves till the deity reaches the hundredth year of his life when the old god himself dies and Maha Pralaya (great cataclysm) supervenes. After hundred Brahma years of Maha Pralaya, a new Brahma is born out of a Mundane Egg

* Only a bare outline of the Yugas is given here; more detailed information on the subject will be found in the author's book, *Epics, Myths and Legends of India.*

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floating on the warring waters of Maha Pralaya, and he takes up the work of creation, only to suffer the fate of his predecessor. The process thus repeats itself *ad infinitum*.

Beyond this ceaseless whirl of worlds is a static reality called Atman causing this endless flux but not affected by it, the "Unmoved Mover" as Aristotle designated it. The object of life is to find liberation from the world of dynamics and establish union with Atman. For the purpose of our subject, it is not, however, necessary to go into the details of the nature of the Atman and the methods of realising the soul's identity with it, but suffice to say, for general guidance, that Brahma created this world and its creatures.

When our Brahma was born he was not alone. With him were born two other gods, his compeers Vishnu and Shiva, the three constituting the Hindu trinity. As Brahma is the creator, so Vishnu is the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer of the universe. In other words, Shiva destroys what Brahma creates and Vishnu preserves. The three deities would thus seem to be in eternal conflict but in reality the three functions are harmonious; for creation is impossible without destruction of existing forms preserved in time, however transitory; the process is an ever recurring rearrangement which involves destruction of existing forms and weaving out of new patterns.

Besides, the three deities are not fundamentally different from one another. In fact, sectarians often endue Vishnu or Shiva with all the three functions, and pantheism, which predominates all orthodox Hindu religious conceptions reconciles the most opposing views.

RELIGIOUS COSMOLOGY

Ours is not the only inhabited world in the universe. Though it is difficult to find in Hindu scriptures, precise classifications, the cosmos, from what we can gather from the epics and the *Puranas* which deal with the subject in detail, may be divided into three: the upper, lower and hell regions.

Lowermost are the various hells (twenty-one according to certain scriptures, but more according to others), each reserved for a particular type of sinner. The regular inhabitants of hells are not devils but servants of the god Yama, the superintendent of hells, who mete out punishments to the souls of sinners brought into these regions. How the idea of punishment in hells and reward in heaven has been reconciled in Hinduism with the doctrine of transmigration will be dealt with later. For the present it is enough for us to note that the hells are not eternal but serve the purpose of purgatories, for though the torture and the instruments and material for this are fearsome and repulsive, hells will perish in the general destruction of the universe and as such hell-life even for the worst sinner is temporary.

Above the hells are the seven lower worlds known as Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala, Talatala, Mahatala and Patala. These are not places of punishment but regions inhabited by various classes of beings. The *Puranas* describe these lower worlds as "regions adorned with beautiful palaces, groves and streams, where the sun diffuses light not heat, and the moon shines for illumination, not for cold; where the air is resonant with the song of birds, and where all kinds of delicious food and intoxicating beverages are ready at hand for the benefit of those who wish to enjoy them."

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These worlds have great cities, fortresses and castles, and an abundance of wealth; the inhabitants are mainly Nagas (a race of half-men, half-serpents) and Asuras (or Daityas, of whom more presently) who are at perpetual war with the gods who inhabit the upper regions. Patala is the main stronghold of the Nagas whose capital Bhogavati has the distinction of having the richest collection of precious stones as the Nagas are particularly noted for their attachment to these. The Nagas are ruled over by three chiefs, Shesha, Vasuki and Takshaka, who also have control over the snakes of the earth. In sorcery connected with the cure of snake-bites these chief Nagas are often invoked by spells.

The upper worlds, like the lower, are seven in number: Bhur (the earth), Bhuvar (ether), Swar (heaven), Mahah, Janah, Tapah and Satya. These have many sub-divisions, but the first three may be said to be the regions of sentient beings endowed with the sense of pain and pleasure, the four worlds above being mystic regions of transcendental beings past the stage of experiencing joy or sorrow. Of the first three, Bhur, our own earth, is dominated by beings of grosser bodies, humans, animals, birds, etc., while Bhuvar is the main abode of spirits, good and bad, of manes or Pitris awaiting judgement, and of ghosts, goblins, etc. Bhur, according to certain scriptures, has an advantage over other regions as liberation is possible only to humans, and other beings, even gods, have to get themselves reborn as men before they can attain final beatitude.

Swar is the region of celestials and their attendants, and Indra, king of gods, holds court here with his ministers, advisers and assistants. It is this heaven of Indra that is sought after by the majority of Hindus who wish to enjoy all the pleasures of the flesh before final absorption into the Atman. All delights are found here. Boon-granting trees shed their fragrant flowers and bend their boughs, laden with luscious fruits, to him who stretches his hand. Celestial brooks flowing delicious wines skirt the beautiful groves, and Apsaras, the voluptuous celestial nymphs of enchanting form, wander in the bowers granting their favours to any one who wishes to enjoy their company.

The Asuras inhabiting the nether regions have always an eye on this region, and often assail the gods from below.

The regions above Swar are Dhyana Lokas or formless, mystic worlds of absorption, and need not be discussed here as the beings (if at all they can be called beings) of these regions have nothing to do with the inhabitants of the worlds below them.

In some Hindu scriptures the fourteen worlds of the upper and lower regions are, at times, spoken of as *the universe*, while in others the universe is said to be composed of three regions.

Rising above hells and losing its heights in the Dhyana Lokas is the mountain Meru or Sumeru, which forms a sort of axis and support to the worlds. This mountain figures prominently in all cosmological conceptions of India, including those of the Jains and the Buddhists, and in Chapter 10 it will be noticed that the human vertebral column is treated as the Sumeru of the microcosm.

THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSMIGRATION

The central dogma of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, as is well known, is metempsychosis or the belief in transmigration of souls. The souls of all sentient beings (except those who have, by accumulated merit, obtained release from further life) immediately on death, or shortly after, are believed to migrate into other

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bodies according to the merits or demerits of their Karma or actions; the process continues, maybe for thousands of lives, till all Karma attached to the particular soul is completely worn out.

Now this transmigration can take place in any of the planes described above. A human being, for instance, can be reborn as an animal, bird, reptile, etc., on earth, as a god in the celestial plane or as an Asura or Naga in the lower regions, the main factor that decides his rebirth being the good or bad actions he had done. But the important point to be noted is that a man's soul does not, immediately it has shed its gross or earthly body, straight away transmigrate and get reborn. The soul has to be judged before Yama, god of death, and has to receive its punishment in hell for the evil it has done or rewards in heaven for its good deeds. Only after this, is the soul left free to transmigrate.

To understand the idea of transmigration fully, it is necessary for the reader to know something about the make-up of what we call a human being. The chief constituents of a human being may be divided into three: the soul, the Sukshma Sarira or subtle body which is, more or less, a permanent appendix to the soul till its final liberation, and the Sthula Sarira or gross body. The soul is unchangeable, above all sense of pleasure or pain; the subtle and gross bodies have sensibilities and manifold variations that lend themselves to innumerable conditions, but we need not, at present, go into the details of these classifications. Suffice to say here that a man, on death, sheds his gross body but the soul with its subtle body is not completely detached from its earthly moorings, and hence hovers round the cremation ground. To sever the soul's connection with the gross body and make it soar with its subtle body to the regions of Yama, it is necessary to invest it with an intervening frame. The funeral obsequies and the Shraddha ceremonies performed immediately after, are believed to give it this frame and the necessary nourishment for the journey to the court of Yama.

It must be emphasized that all souls are alike, and the main differences among various kinds of beings, gods, demons, humans, animals, Nagas, etc., are in the composition of their subtle and gross bodies. Humans and animals, for instance, have very cumbersome gross bodies; they are, on that account, handicapped in their movements, cannot soar into space, and have a short span of life. In comparison to humans, Asuras, Apsaras, etc., have fine bodies, and gods, finer, which facilitate their mobility through the several worlds, make them invisible to humans and prevent premature death through decay.

Anyway, just as a human being is capable of getting born as a god or demon, these can also be reborn as humans. All the several worlds and their creatures are so inter-related by this universal process of transmigration that no very strict line of demarcation is possible between various classes of sentient beings. For instance, a demon may get reborn as a human being as the result of some good deed he had done but may bring with him some of his demoniac traits, just as a god condemned to earthly life for some lapse may retain some of his divine traits. In fact, Hindu scriptures often give such explanations for the inexplicable wickedness of certain human beings and the particularly desirable nature of certain others.

GODS

While the three great gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were born out of primordial chaos, their Saktis or spouses and other gods were born either from these

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three by mysterious mental processes or through beings created by them. Goddesses, it must be mentioned, do not bear children by what we call the natural methods of reproduction; nor is sex activity necessary for a god to have a son. A god, while moved by anger is, for instance, capable of producing from his frown a formidable form of the god himself or a ferocious spirit, while from his amorous smile might leap forth a young goddess of lovely form.

A good many gods, demons, Nagas and other beings were born of celestial progenitors known in Hindu scriptures as Prajapatis or celestial patriarchs, the mental sons of Brahma, the creator. One Prajapati, Kasyapa, was particularly prolific; a number of gods were born of his wife Aditi who were, on that account, called Adityas, while a greater number of demons were born of his second wife Diti, and were as such called Daityas. Kasyapa's third wife gave birth to the man-bird Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu and mortal enemy of the Nagas; these, again, were born of his fourth wife Kadru. The idea is linked with the general Hindu conception that gods, demons, animals, birds and reptiles, even those who live in mortal dread of one another, have a common origin. Gods and demons, kites and snakes are all, in reality, half-brothers.

The number of gods in the Hindu pantheon is computed to be thirty-three crores in addition to the three members of the Trinity. For our purpose, however, the most important deities may be said to be the Shaiva group consisting of Shiva, his Sakti or spouse, and two sons, Ganesha and Kartikeya. Shiva, as the god of destruction and regeneration, holds a high place in all the mysterious and esoteric cults of Hinduism, and his wife even a higher place. As we shall see in a later chapter, the spouse of Shiva is the presiding deity of the Sakti form of sex worship and her terror-inspiring manifestation, Kali, is the chief agent invoked in sorcery intended to destroy undesirable persons.

The Shiva family commands the allegiance of millions of malignant spirits, ferocious, ill-looking, of weird shapes and sizes and of varied proclivities; these spirits were either created by the deities themselves in their battles against their enemies or by Brahma, other gods and their agents. This formidable army of spirits, as far as humans are concerned, is normally harmless since they are under discipline and seldom act independently; but when the deity commanding them is provoked, the blood-thirsty horde is let loose on humanity and brings about wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes and large scale destruction of life. For the same reason the deities invoked by spells and sacrifices in Marana Kriya (sorcery intended to destroy) are mainly Shiva and his spouse, their destructive manifestations and the numerous spirits under their charge. In temples dedicated to these deities are planted trees for the accommodation of these spirits. The vehicle or charger of Shiva, the bull Nandi, shares with his master the worship of his devotees.

Certain forms of Vishnu, especially the formidable boar and man-lion incarnations noted for their ferocity are also invoked in sorcery, while his charger Garuda, the inveterate enemy of serpents, is a favourite of those who practise the art of prevention and cure of snake-bite by magic. The monkey-god Hanuman is often invoked in cases where excessive physical effort is indicated, as Hanuman is considered the embodiment of muscular strength.

The gods of the Hindu pantheon are, more or less, magnified humans. They have their moods and lapses; they often lose their temper, suffer hunger and thirst and have sexual desires; having no gross bodies they are less exposed to the danger

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Mahadeva (Shiva). Fresco from Sittanavasal
(From N. C. Mehta's *Studies in Indian Painting*)

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of sudden decay and premature death than human beings; their fine bodies give them better mobility through the different planes of the universe; blessed with great occult powers, they can gain their objects much more quickly and effectively than ordinary human beings. Further, they can be invoked, controlled and made to do the biddings of human beings by means of Mantras or spells.

ASURAS

The Asura, though generally mentioned as a synonym for the Evil One in Hindu scriptures, is a generic name for a class of beings inimical to the gods. While the Asuras are at perpetual war with the gods, they do not seem to be much worse than their enemies in many respects. The Asuras too, like the gods, possess fine subtle bodies; they are warlike and physically powerful and are adepts in occult sciences. They live in palaces and beautiful groves, have forts, ramparts and castles, perform religious rites and penances, and are capable of obtaining boons from the great gods of the pantheon; they know the use of several magic weapons and have proved, on occasions, better fighters than the gods. Some of their emperors and generals have even conquered Swar or the Heaven of Indra and driven the celestials out of their abode or taken them into captivity.

The Asuras are also known as Daityas, Danavas, Rakshasas, etc.; they were most active in the Threta Yuga and the *Ramayana* which deals mainly with this epoch has, for its theme, the destruction of the Asura Ravana by Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu. Ravana was the demon king of Lanka or Ceylon, then the greatest stronghold of Rakshasas whose activities were not, however, confined to the island but extended to other regions of the earth, to heaven and the lower regions. They are described in the epic as of varied shape and size, some as big as mountains, others small as the little finger, some well formed and beautiful and others ill-looking or of forbidding appearance. Blood-thirsty and of cannibalistic tendencies, the Rakshasas roved the forests of South India, laid waste the habitations of the hermits who had colonies there, stole their oblations and ate human beings. The females often lusted after young, handsome men, and in the *Ramayana* it is related that Surpanaka, Ravana's sister, fell so madly in love with Lakshmana, Rama's younger brother, that on his resisting her advances she seized him by force and had to be mutilated by him. Ravana himself, as is well known, abducted Sita, Rama's wife, and this was the main cause of the *Ramayana* war.

Ravana is described in the *Ramayana* as a ten-headed monster with twenty arms, copper coloured eyes, and teeth like the full moon. He conquered the lower worlds, seized all the treasures of Bhogavati, capital of Patala, and carried off the beloved wife of the Naga Takshaka. He then waged war on his half-brother Kubera, god of wealth, and made Lanka the capital of his vast empire. From here he assailed the upper worlds, conquered Swar and took captive the gods who were made to do menial work in his palaces and groves. His forts and castles were almost impregnable and it was with the greatest difficulty that Rama and his allies conquered Lanka and killed Ravana.

But this demon was not without virtues. He was a devoted son and doted on his aged mother. He was a master of the art of practising penances and made the great god Shiva grant him several boons. Though depicted in the *Ramayana* as an inveterate enemy of Vishnu, Ravana was originally a devoted steward of

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Vishnu and was condemned to be reborn as a demoniac enemy of his master through the curse of a sage whom he happened to offend.

Another Asura, praised in Hindu scriptures for his generosity, martial powers and adherence to truth and the pledged word, was Bali whom Vishnu had to conquer by a stratagem as he was invincible in a straight fight.

All this would indicate that the grand division of gods and Asuras in Hindu demonology is not based on ethical grounds as is the case with the division of angels and devils in Christian theology, but rather on ethnic grounds or group loyalties.

The Asuras too, like humans, are affected by the general degeneration of our decaying universe, and in the Dwapara Yuga, of which epoch the *Mahabharata* deals, their activities were much less widespread. The Asuras or Rakshasas described in the *Mahabharata* are fewer in number and much less powerful than those of the Threta Yuga. Their activities too became more subtle; for instance, when in love with mortal women, they approached them in their sleep or disguised as their husbands and produced human progeny with Asura traits. Two well-known Asuras of the Dwapara Yuga were Kansa and Shishupala whom Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu destroyed; both were born of mortal women who were possessed by Asuras. A few other Asuras inhabiting forests or roving the earth doing harm to humans are mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, but none had the stature of Ravana and his chiefs.

In the Kali Yuga the depredations of Asuras have become even less noticeable. As a rule they leave human beings alone and their activities are at present confined mainly to their own planes; an occasional rover or straggler might possess a man or woman, but as a class they have lost their energy to soar upwards to Bhur or regions above and little harm is now feared from the Asura class of demons.

YAKSHAS, APSARAS, GANDHARVAS AND KINNARAS

The Yakshas occupy a prominent place in the spirit world as conceived by the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jains. They are said to be the attendants of Kubera, the god of wealth, and the guardians of his treasures, but their activities often extend to the terrestrial plane, especially to forests. By nature the Yakshas are docile but the Yakshis (as the females of the species are called) are of a more aggressive type, endowed as they are with a very strong sex nature. Figures of Yakshis are often seen in temples, and they were, in ancient and medieval India, held up as models of voluptuous charm. Yakshis are not loyal to their own class and are capable of possessing handsome or virile men. They too, like the Yakshas, live in forests and in wild places and mishaps to young men who travel alone in these regions are often ascribed to the activities of Yakshis.

Apsaras are the dancers of Indra's court. Born to provide pleasure, they are free from moral bonds and are, like the courtesans of this world, contemptuous of the virtuous and of ascetics. They are, in fact, the dread of those holy men engaged in austerities and other pious exercises which negate the pleasures of life. There are several stories in Hindu scriptures of their having tempted famous sages and brought about their spiritual ruin. The royal sage Viswamitra, for instance, fell for the charms of the Apsara Menaka, and Shakuntala, the heroine of Kalidasa's famous play of that name, was born of the amour.

These Apsaras, though generally harmless, are capable of haunting the austere

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even now, and a ribald one may possess in sport a good looking young man. Hence Hindu mothers take care to protect their young sons, especially before marriage, when they are considered particularly susceptible to attack by unprincipled Apsaras and Yakshis, by means of lockets, charms and amulets.

The Gandharvas and Kinnaras provide the choir for the Apsaras, and live in free love with them. Having no moral scruples, they possess young women as the Apsaras do young men. A Gandharva named Visvavasu is believed to be attached to every maiden, and in marital rites there are special ceremonies performed to release a maiden from the possession of this ubiquitous Gandharva. Agreeable to this notion, in Vasikarana or sorcery intended to lure or win women, Visvavasu is an important agent invoked.

It is significant that a love-marriage among the Hindus is known as a Gandharva marriage, as distinct from arranged matches; in the Gandharva form the partners can take their pleasure with each other without anybody's leave.

Because of their moral laxity, the Yakshas, Gandharvas, Apsaras and Kinnaras are not allowed permanent residence in heaven; they live on the wooded slopes of the mountain Sumeru, bordering on Bhuvar and Swar Lokas, and from here descend at times to the terrestrial plane.

BHUTAS, PRETAS AND PISACHAS

The spirits that are dreaded most in India at present are not the classes mentioned so far, but ghosts known as Bhutas, Pretas and Pisachas, all earth-bound goblins generated by dead humans.

We have already noticed that for a soul to proceed to the regions of Yama, god of death and judgement, it is necessary to invest the subtle body appended to the soul with an intervenient frame capable of receiving nourishment, and to detach it from its earthly moorings. It is here that the living can help the dead. In fact, the performance of funeral rites is an imperative duty imposed upon every Hindu, and its dereliction is considered the most heinous sin a man can commit.

It takes, as a rule, the performance of ten days' ceremony to invest the departed soul with a sensitive intermediary frame. The *Garuda Purana* says that if the ceremonies are correctly performed, the soul gets, on the first day, a head; on the second, a neck; on the third, a heart; on the fourth, a spine; on the fifth, the navel; on the sixth, genitals; on the seventh, thighs; on the eighth, knees; on the ninth, ankles; and on the tenth, feet. The body thus made whole on the tenth day needs nourishment and for this purpose the Shraddha ceremony is performed. The main item of the Shraddha is the giving of food, clothes and other gifts to Brahmins in general and the officiating priests in particular; what is thus given is believed to pass on to the departed ancestor and equip him with the things needed for undertaking the journey to Pitri Loka (region of Pitris or manes) and from there, to Yama Loka or the region of Yama.

In the absence of funeral rites or when they are partially or imperfectly performed, the soul and the subtle body are unable to detach themselves from their earthly surroundings. When the subtle body is not completely freed from its associations with the gross body, the whole make-up gets out of joint and haunts the place of its death.

Such ghosts fall into three main divisions: Bhuta, Preta and Pisacha. The classification is not, however, very rigid; all the three belong to the same ghost

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class and the terms are at times interchangeable. The Bhuta, generally stated, is the ghost of a man who had suffered violent death (a murdered person, one killed by a wild animal or in an accident, by drowning, etc.), and for whom no funeral ceremonies were performed. The person need not necessarily have been wicked to generate the ghost; even virtuous persons, in the circumstances mentioned above, may turn into Bhutas if the funeral ceremonies are not performed in time.

A Preta is a deformed ghost. Here death may be natural, but the deformity is caused by partial, incomplete or deranged funeral rites. As a rule, the deformity of the gross body gets attached to the subtle body in a semi-visible form; a hunchback or cripple, for instance, may carry with him a corresponding disability in the ghost plane. Children dying in embryo or soon after birth without purification rites being performed, may also turn into ill-looking ghosts of the Preta class.

A Pisacha is the most dreadful of the ghosts. It is the ill-formed, aggressive ghost of a wicked man notorious for his evil deeds. Such ghosts, for obvious reasons, are naturally malicious and even correctly performed funeral rites may not be able to prevent the wicked from turning into ghosts as their many sins bind them to the earth; but in the absence of funeral rites they turn particularly ferocious and violent; their form is dark, fearsome and forbidding.

These ghosts are very numerous, for perfect ceremonies can only be performed for the three Aryan castes, and even among these, in case of accidental deaths, etc., the rites are not at times performed in time. Then again, a funeral ceremony can be deranged by the ignorance or incompetence of the officiating priest, and the sufferers are the dead.

All this leads to the formation of innumerable ghosts, and the terrestrial plane and the Bhuvar Loka, immediately above, are thick with Bhutas, Pretas and Pisachas. These ghosts usually haunt the sites familiar to them as their earthly attachments remain strong for a long time.

The ghosts too have their release. For Time, that all-devouring monster, in due course will wear away the earthly attachments of the most bigoted ghost; further, the ceremonies performed for all souls by the pious may benefit them and enable them to undertake the journey to Yama Loka. Till this happens, they hover about the earth haunting the living.

All ghosts are not necessarily wicked. Their plight is that they have all the desires of the flesh, at times to a greater degree than humans, but in the absence of a gross body are unable to satisfy them. It is as if a hungry man finds that he has no mouth to eat. Though they have shed the gross body, the ghosts have, in the subtle body and in their desires, a common link with humans; unable to act independently they try to sate their cravings through the agency of human beings whom they possess for the purpose.

Though the ghost, for the first few days of the soul's shedding of the gross body, is violently attached to the site of death, time wears away the bond and in due course it moves away especially if the surroundings are not very congenial. As a rule, ghosts avoid bright and crowded areas and prefer lonely gloomy places for their permanent residence. Caves, deserted houses, etc., are favoured by some ghosts whose violent longings have been tempered by time, while others are fond of certain kinds of trees like the Banyan, Peepal, Palasa, etc.

Some of these ghosts have subtle and shadowy forms that can, under exceptional circumstances, become visible to the naked human eye. The intensity of a

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desire or the habitual indulgence in a particular activity by a ghost makes its form more amenable to visibility than in the quiescent state.

THE SPIRIT WORLD OF THE ABORIGINES

The beings so far described belong mainly to what orthodox Indo-Aryan religions teach as existent in the several cosmic planes. But all Hindus are not Indo-Aryans. Only the three higher castes, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, in fact those who are invested with the sacred thread, are the Indo-Aryans proper; the Sudras, the Panchamas (literally, fifth caste, as the numerous sub-castes below the Sudras in social scale are collectively designated) and the large number of aborigines who inhabit the hills and forest regions of India are outside the pale of regular Indo-Aryan society, but are still considered Hindus. A too racial an interpretation should not, however, be given to the conception; for in the three higher castes are included not only the Aryans who conquered and settled down in the country some three thousand years ago, but later invaders of alien races who forced their way into the Indo-Aryan socio-religious framework as well as indigenous races powerful enough to extract recognition and equality of treatment from the Aryan conquerors. Hence by the term "Indo-Aryans" is to be understood the three upper castes, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas who have the right to the sacred thread and are generally bound by the *Dharma Sastras* or regular Indo-Aryan codes of law.

Outside these castes, society and religion are based on traditional beliefs and usages. The non-Aryan castes generally accept the superiority of Brahmins and give generously to temples where Brahmanical ritual is practised, though they have their own shrines and priests; the Brahmins, on their part, recognize the validity of the traditional usages of these castes on the broad principle that all forms of sincere beliefs and practices are so many roads to liberation, some short, others long, but all leading to the same destination. Besides, many of the gods, godlings and spirits worshipped by the non-Aryan castes have been given niches in the Indo-Aryan pantheon as minor manifestations of Aryan deities. Thus, most of the mother-goddesses of primitive India, numerous godlings of the fields and fertility rites with their marked leanings towards human sacrifices, are recognised by Brahmins as the manifestations of Kali, the Indo-Aryan goddess of terror, while some of the male spirits and godlings are accepted as manifestations of Shiva, his sons or charger.

Among the aborigines of India, the Adivasis (original inhabitants as they are called in the official records at present), ancestor worship forms, as among many other primitive tribes throughout the world, an important part of religion. The departed ones are believed to watch over the tribe, note down their shortcomings, and generally guide them in their communal and individual life. These ancestors are worshipped collectively on ceremonial occasions and a good part of the ritual consists in oracular expressions by the departed through mediums. Many of the ills of the tribe and individuals are attributed to the activities of offended ancestors, and prosperity to their patronage and goodwill.

Apart from ancestors, there are gods and goddesses of the fields on whom depend abundance and good crops; droughts, floods, pests and weeds are believed to be caused by the anger of these godlings and they have to be kept in good humour by sacrifice of victims, spilling their blood and burying their flesh in the fields.

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Since the childish primitive mind is inclined to invest all objects and phenomena with volition, most of the objects primitive man comes across, particularly those that please or repel him, are personified into spirits. Thus there are spirits of mountains, crags and hills, of trees and plants, of ravines and eddies and of storms, lightning and thunder.

In primitive India the worship of female spirits is more widespread than that of males. The mothers are sources of much good and evil; they cause the fertility of the earth, seasonal rainfall, plentiful harvest and general prosperity, as well as epidemics, pestilence and famines, and are periodically propitiated by bloody sacrifices.

A good part of the religion of the primitive peoples of India consists in witchcraft involving the invoking or exorcism of these spirits, and their magical rites are often accompanied by violent dances, heavy drinking, shedding of blood, drumbeating and yelling at midnight.

THE PHENOMENON OF POSSESSION

We have seen that a living being according to the Hindus has a soul, a subtle body and a gross body; differences in creatures are said to arise mainly due to variations in the build of their subtle and gross bodies, all souls being alike.

The gross bodies, we can easily see, are of different shape, size and complexion; some are well-shaped and handsome, others ill-looking and deformed, some short-lived and others living to a mature old age. In the same manner, subtle bodies too differ widely according to individuals. Gods, Asuras and spirits of various classes have only subtle bodies.

Both the subtle and gross bodies have certain Gunas or attributes and the complexities of life are caused by the interplay of these Gunas, the proportion of which to one another differs in individuals. These Gunas or qualities fall into three main divisions: Satva (refinement), Tamas (coarseness) and Rajas (active attributes). The first two involve moral issues while the third, Rajas, is amoral and merely accentuates the working of Satva or Tamas. Each of these Gunas has numerous subdivisions; it is not necessary for our purpose to go into the details of these, but suffice to note that the interplay of these subdivisions on one another is capable of producing anything from very fine differences, scarcely distinguishable, to fantastic variations in the make-up of living beings and inert objects.

A being, as a rule, has all the three Gunas, but in some Satva predominates, in others Tamas and in still others Rajas. It is a law of these Gunas that like attracts the like. Love at first sight, certain inexplicable attractions and repulsions, etc., are attributed to this law.

Now a spirit has no gross body of the type a man possesses, but in the subtle body of man it has something very much like its own body. The ghost class of spirits, especially, as we have seen, have certain appetites of the gross body clinging to their subtle forms without means of satisfying them, because of the unfortunate nature of their peculiar position. In this predicament, a hungry or sexually excitable ghost may establish connection with or possess a man having a like subtle body in order to work through the gross body of the man and get relief, if not complete satisfaction. The disharmony inherent in such a maladjustment is obvious, and the spirit itself is not quite at home in the man's gross body; yet its position is better than when it works alone. The activities of the spirit or ghost

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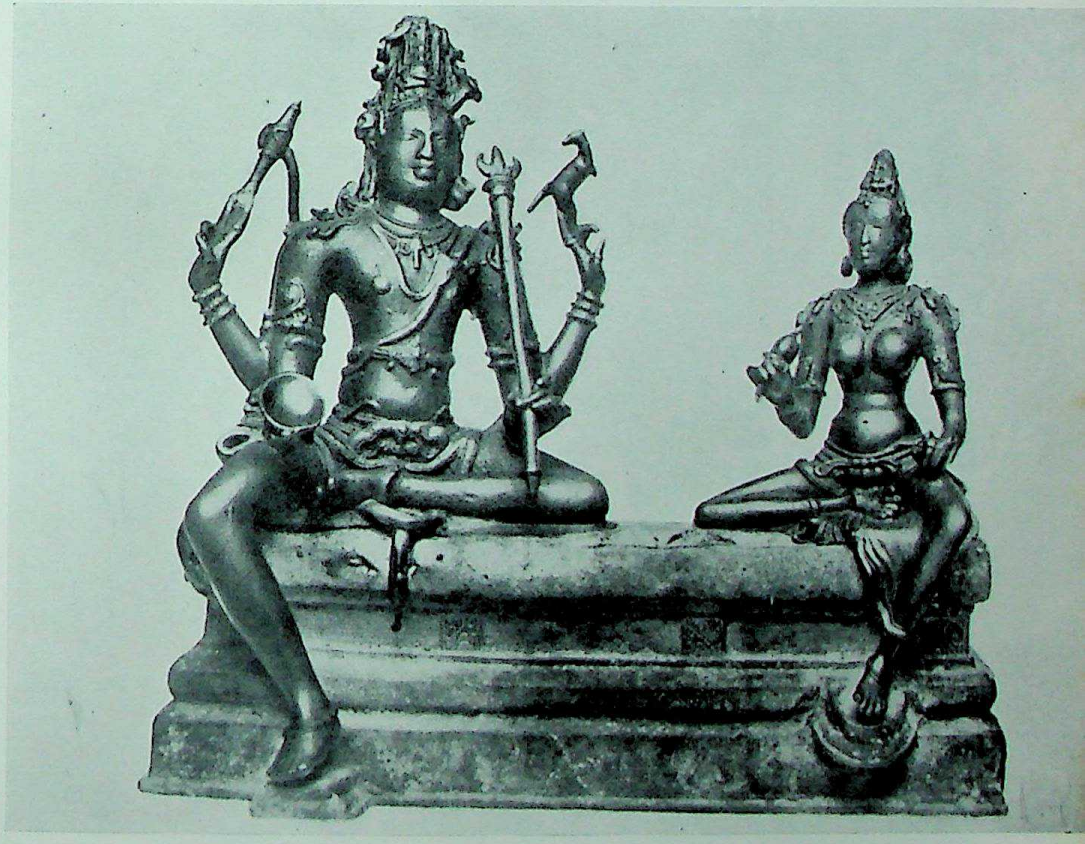

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1. PARVATI, WIFE OF SHIVA
(*Courtesy*: Government Museum, Madras)

2. RAMA, SEVENTH INCARNATION OF VISHNU AND HERO OF *RAMAYANA*
(*Courtesy*: Government Museum, Madras)

3. HANUMAN, THE MONKEY GOD
He is often invoked in sorcery to destroy enemies
(*Courtesy*: Government Museum, Madras)

4. SHIVA, THE GOD OF DESTRUCTION
(*Courtesy*: Government Museum, Madras)

5. SHIVA AND HIS WIFE PARVATI (*Courtesy*: Government Museum, Madras)

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6. YAKSHI
A Semi-mythical female noted for voluptuousness
(*Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

7. KARTIKEYA, HINDU GOD OF WAR
Gupta Period. Cir. 6th century A.D.

8. GANDHARVA, A CELESTIAL MUSICIAN
Gandharvas live in free love with Apsaras, Celestial Dancers
(*From* Vellore Temple, *Photo*: E. S. Mahalingam)

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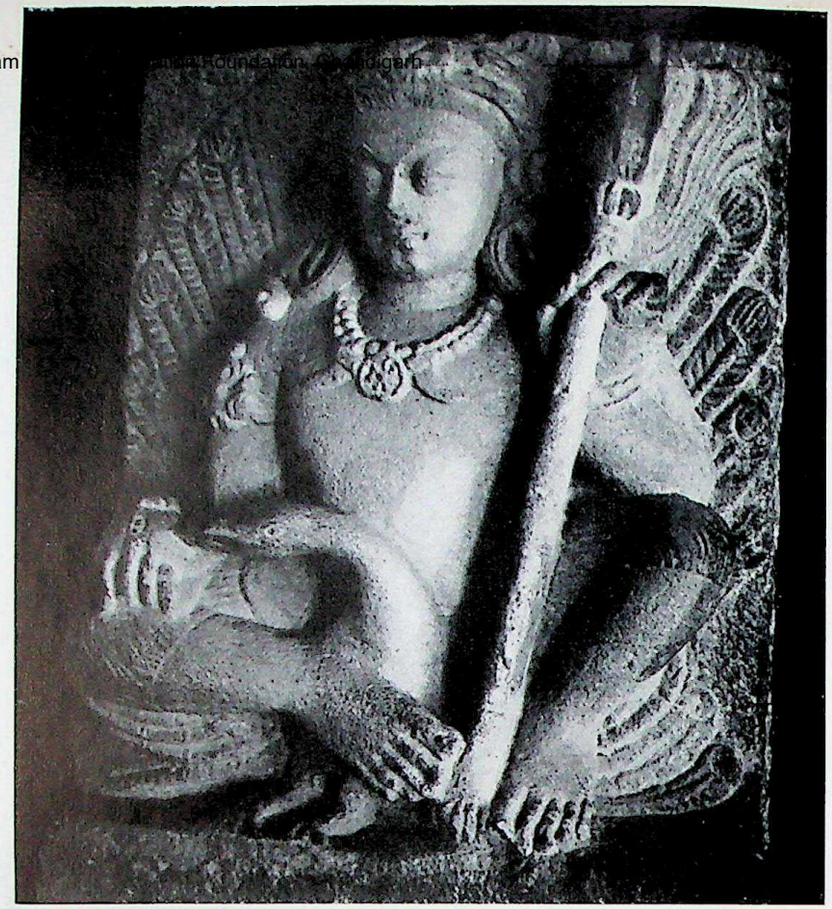

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9. DANCING GANESHA
This Elephant-headed deity, also known as Vinayaka, is capable of possessing and tormenting people when offended (*From* Vedaranyam Temple, Vellore. *Photo*: N. Ramakrishna)

10. YAKSHA, A SEMI-MYTHICAL BEING
Yakshas are capable of possessing good-looking women (*From* Mathura Museum. *Courtesy*: Chiranji Lal & Co.)

11. KARTIKEYA, THE WAR GOD
(*From* Vellore. *Photo*: E. S. Mahalingam)

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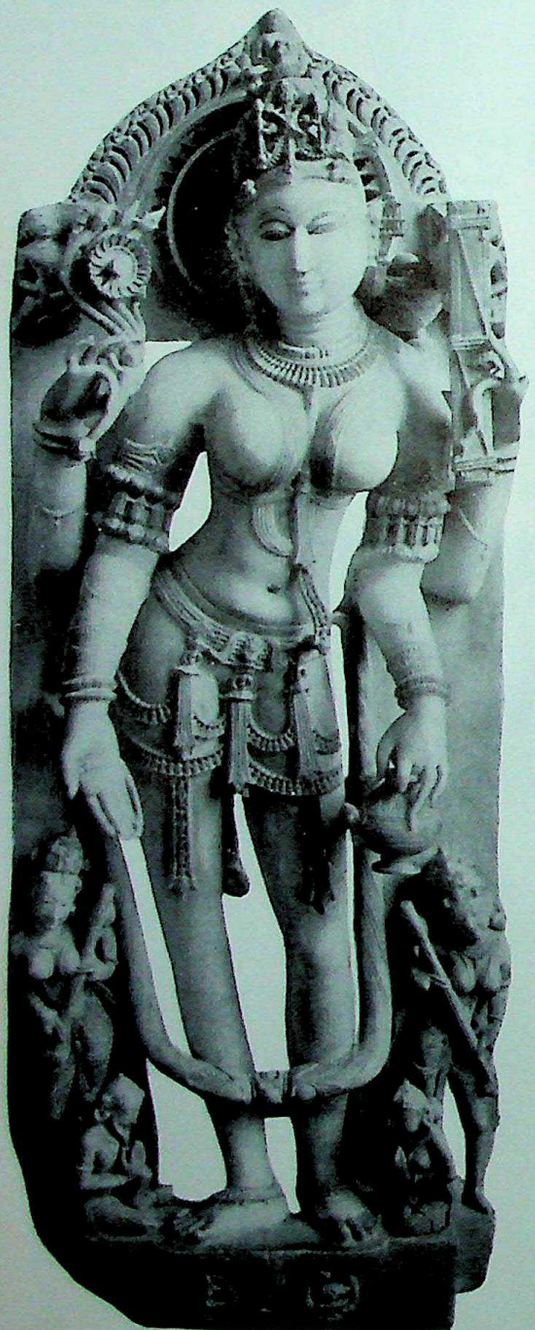
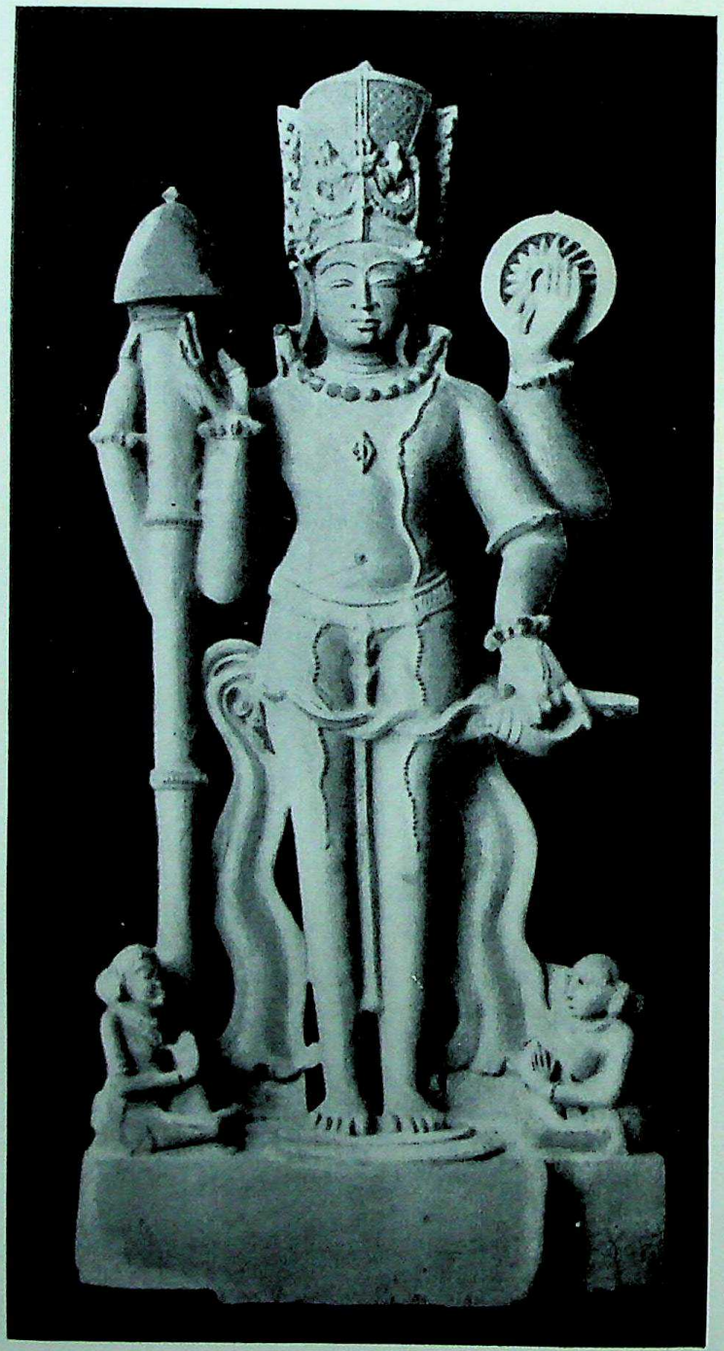


12. SARASVATI, GODDESS OF LEARNING
(Marble. Bikaner. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

13. VISHNU, GOD OF PRESERVATION
(*From* Sultanpur. Lucknow Museum)



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would naturally disturb the balance of the possessed, and the burden of exorcism is to sever this connection between the spirit and its unfortunate victim.

From the foregoing, it is clear that all people cannot be possessed by all spirits. The correct relation between the body of the spirit and the subtle body of the human being is a necessary condition of possession; modern spiritualists tell us that a spirit cannot work unless it gets a medium. According to Hindu theory one medium cannot be effective for all spirits. Men dominated by Satva quality are not generally attracted by spirits of Tamasaic nature and *vice versa*, though in rare cases such things have happened mainly through the working of interested agencies.

Hindu scriptures give elaborate details about symptoms of possession and how to detect the type of spirit by studying the behavior of the possessed. The main problem of the exorcist is to find out the nature and class of the spirit that has possessed the individual. The matter is discussed in Hindu texts with the same thoroughness as the diagnosis and treatment of diseases.

In the *Agni Purana*, for instance, we read that a man possessed by Vinayaka (a mildly malevolent form of the elephant-headed god Ganesha) "sees shaven heads or skulls, fancies himself, in sleep, riding on monsters or demons. He hears, as he walks, the sound of unseen footsteps. He becomes morose and depressed and loses the power of concentration; his body becomes emaciated without any apparent ailment and his works bear no fruit. A maiden possessed by Vinayaka rejects all offers of marriage; a married woman sleeps away from her husband, develops aversion to sexual pleasures and remains barren; a student, possessed by the spirit, rejects his preceptors and throws away his books; a trader so afflicted neglects his business, a farmer, his fields, and a king his royal duties."

More violent symptoms are manifested in possession by spirits of an aggressive nature; women possessed by Yakshis, for instance, become shameless while a man possessed by a murderous Pisacha becomes violent and uncontrollable.

The exorcist, who deals with possession, must be an adept in the knowledge of the nature and habits of spirits. Some spirits are carnivorous and cannibalistic; some are easily coaxed out of the possessed while others are obstinate devils; some can be lured away but others will have to be driven out. The main method employed in exorcism is first to find out the type of the spirit, and then act in the prescribed manner for driving it away. In sorcery practised by Indo-Aryans, invoking the goddess Kali or some ferocious manifestation of Shiva is considered effective in all cases of possession, but when these deities are called in for minor work, they are likely to get offended, and expiatory ceremonies have to be performed in such cases.

Apart from possession by spirits of their own accord for the satisfaction of their desires, in malignant rites a sorcerer may invoke and send a spirit to possess a victim. Certain sorcerers are particularly attached to spirits of this type which are constantly served and fed; and by spells and offerings, they send them on errands of evil.

THE VALIDITY OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

My main attempt here will be to give the reader a representative idea of sorcery and allied arts as practised in India, and not a justification of black arts. Yet it is difficult for the curious not to enquire how much truth there is in the belief in spirits and in the claim of those who profess to control them.

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One thing few people can deny: a human being is endowed with only a few senses which cannot, by the very nature of their limitations, comprehend all the mysterious powers at work in the universe. By implication, there are possibly beings and forces that men are unable to perceive; a man cannot, for instance, see or feel such organisms as the virus. If there are creatures in the physical plane difficult or impossible of perception by man, it is not to be wondered that there are possibly beings in the spiritual plane that are not perceived by the generality of humans.

The idea will be clearer on illustration. Suppose all men were born blind like certain worms; then what we call light, colour, form, beauty, etc., would be matters of heated controversy just as the spirit world at present is. Possibly, human beings lack a sixth sense that would have enabled them to see the spirit world and its inhabitants direct; at present we have to work indirectly to get even a partial perception of the mystic plane. Further, what we really know of the physical plane itself is negligible compared to what we do not know. When such is our ignorance of matters to know which we are provided with direct senses, the difficulty of comprehending things for which we have to develop latent powers can very well be appreciated. Misconceptions and exaggerated claims based on partial perceptions no doubt there are, but it would not be quite scientific to reject the whole mystic world as purely imaginative on that account.

The intellectual and mystic worlds are so far apart that any attempt at perceiving the plane of spirits by reasoning is doomed to fail; it is like a deaf man trying to enjoy the melody of music by means of a telescope.

Then there is the weight of tradition in favour of a belief in the spirit plane. The existence of spirits has been believed in by all races of the world, with negligible exceptions, throughout the history of humanity. All religions, primitive or well-developed, teach the survival of personality after death. The Buddha, Jesus Christ, Confucius, Mohammad, in short, practically all great world teachers have approved of the belief in spirits; in the New Testament, Jesus is said to have cast demons out of the possessed. The Catholic Church has always held the view that the devil assumes manifold forms to delude, torment or misguide humans and has regular formulae for exorcism.

As to the question whether or not spirits are real, the intelligent Hindu answers it by another question: is the form of life we see around us real? To the Hindu mystic, even to the philosophers of the idealistic schools of the West, all visible forms of life are delusive. Existence is essentially conditioned by time, space and causation, and hence relative. To the rationalist who denies God, God may seem non-existent, but to the devotee He is an ever-present reality. The Hindus maintain that a certain amount of accumulated merit is necessary for a person to perceive the hidden things of the mystic world, and the Pasu (man of the animal type) is incapable of perceiving anything invisible.

Anyway, the subject has been studied with thoroughness for centuries in India. Apart from the toleration extended to the crude forms of witchcraft of primitive religions, the main burden of certain sections of Indo-Aryan religions has been to rouse the hidden powers in man in order to develop senses that in ordinary humans lie dormant and thereby communicate with the mystic world. The process is by Yoga, a system of body and mind training, and by certain secret arts not made public, and the discipline often lasts for the major part of a man's life before he becomes proficient.

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Part of the science is known as Mantra Sastra, and there are voluminous treatises that deal with the subject in detail. But these works, instructive as they are, cover only the theoretical side of the discipline; for the practical training is never learned from books but from teachers proficient in the science and qualified to impart it to trustworthy disciples.

In India such phenomena as falling into trances, ecstasies, etc., are matters of daily occurrence, and Mantra Sastra is even now a regular branch of religious study and discipline.

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2. *Primitive Magic and Witchcraft*

IN INDIA, as in most other countries of the East, the centuries have a way of living together in perfect harmony. For instance, within some fifty miles of the great modern city of Bombay, a hub of international trade and industry, can be seen primitive tribes living in huts on the slopes of the Western Ghats, and hunting game with bows and arrows as their forefathers had done at the dawn of civilisation. In practically all the forests and mountain regions of India rove nomads from range to range, unaffected by civilisation, pursuing their ancient occupations of fishing, hunting and seasonal farming in the valleys.

Again, the modern way of life is confined to the towns and great cities of India; the vast majority of the population of the country lives in the villages by farming, and the methods of agriculture in rural India have not progressed much from Rig Vedic times. Modernism, no doubt, has made its entry into the Indian village; buses and lorries, for instance, ply through the dusty roads, a radio plays its discordant notes in the house of some important villager and trains thunder through the fields. But the social and religious life of the village remains practically unaffected by these innovations.

There is, besides, little uniformity in the beliefs, customs and manners of the different peoples of India. While the three upper castes are generally governed by the *Dharma Sastras*, the lower castes, as already stated, are guided by tradition and custom, and each caste, sub-caste or tribe, has its own peculiar body of beliefs and habits. The various peoples of India, especially the non-Aryan castes, have derived their social and religious practices from different sources. It must be remembered that, of the conglomeration of races that go by the name of Hindus at present, some came from Central Asia and some from the southern regions of China; others came by sea while still others have their origins lost in antiquity. The cultures of all these peoples have gone into the weaving of the complex socio-religious pattern of India, and the caste system has enabled each community to preserve its traditional institutions remarkably intact.

South India is of particular importance in this connection. Here, the Indo-Aryan culture merely formed a super-structure on the existing Dravidian culture. The influence of Brahmanic religion in South India is mainly confined to the upper strata of society while popular religion even now, is largely a development of indigenous cults of pre-Aryan origin.

All over India, however, most people believe in the spirit world and in the power of the sorcerer to work good or evil by mysterious rites. Here, the difference between Indo-Aryans and non-Aryans is one of degree and not of kind; for while the Indo-Aryan ritual is systematic, refined and learned, the primitive method is crude, grotesque and haphazard, but both have much in common and aim

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at results by mysterious methods that cannot stand the test of reason.

It is quite impossible to give in a work like this a detailed account of all the magical rites of the many castes and tribes of India, each of which has its own peculiar beliefs and cults; hence what is attempted here is merely a general outline within which most of the magical practices of primitive India fall.

SORCERY AS PRIMITIVE SCIENCE

The practice of sorcery, however crude or cruel, marks a definite stage in the evolution of the primitive mind. It is man's first attempt to understand and master the mysterious laws in the universe for his material benefit. The primitive urge was essentially scientific, of the same category which led to the great inventions that have marked the progress of civilisation through the ages. It is not without reason that the sorcerer is often described as the medicine-man; for the science of medicine rose mainly through the art of the sorcerer. His cauldron of crabs, herbs and loathesome objects was the first laboratory in the world, and a good deal of the modern science of healing had its origin in the fearsome rites of the magician.

Much of sorcery is based on primitive logic. Sympathetic magic, as anthropologists call it, is based on the law of similarity: the belief that like causes produce like effects. If, for instance, a sorcerer who wishes to see in the dark, tears out the eyeball of a live cat or owl and prepares with it an ointment for rubbing on his eyes, his activity is not entirely unscientific as it is obvious that there is something in the eye of the owl and the cat which enables them to see in the dark.

Again, a method widely used by sorcerers in India, both in primitive and advanced Indo-Aryan Marana (rituals intended to harm or kill) is to obtain a photograph, image or some other likeness of the intended victim and cause ritual injuries to it in order to cause similar injuries to the victim in the flesh; when a likeness cannot be procured for any reason, the sorcerer often makes an image of the victim in wax or clay. Burning or drowning the image is believed to cause the death of the victim, breaking its limbs, mutilation and piercing it with needles, excruciating pain.

In this form of sorcery, the idea that there is a definite physical relationship between a man and his likeness, capable of working from a distance, is predominant; further, not only the primitive mind, but even the enlightened cannot escape a feeling that a man and his likeness have something in common. In image-worship and in the veneration paid to the portraits of the departed, the idea expresses itself with particular force.

Just as there is a mystic connection between a man and his likeness, there is, the Hindus believe, a definite relation between a man and his name. A man who knows another's name is believed to have power over the latter. Hence in certain regions in India, a Hindu, especially of the three higher castes, keeps his real name a secret and is known under an assumed name.

Another belief that operates in the practice of sorcery is what the anthropologists term the law of contagion, that is, that a part of the body of a man or anything that has been in contact with it is capable of influencing him even when separated from him. Hence a sorcerer often tries to obtain the hair, the nails, etc., of his victim or the clothes he has worn, his sandals or something that has been in contact with him.

These ideas are, of course, capable of wider application. "In the Mandla

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district," says Verrier Elwin, "I have met Gonds who believe that when a man is hanged, a few drops of Jiv-tel or 'life-oil' fall from his body; if this oil is obtained and applied to a dying man, he will be restored to life. In Chittagong, it was, at one time, customary for dacoits (mostly Mohammadans) to spread a shroud stolen from a corpse over the roof of a house to prevent the inhabitants from waking."*

A belief based on common observation and primitive logic is that the guilt, sickness and even the fate of a man can be transferred to another, just like a physical load. The idea had many developments in Hinduism and Buddhism. In certain parts of India, it is customary for a dying man to call in a Brahmin, pay him well and transfer his sins to the Brahmin, who collects the wages of sin, and proceeds to the Ganges or some sacred stream to wash them away. In Buddhism, it is a recognized doctrine that merit accumulated by the virtuous can be transferred in part or in full to those who are spiritually weak. In many parts of India it is widely believed that the death of a man can be prevented by another volunteering to die in the place of the doomed. A historical case of such a self-sacrifice is that of Emperor Baber who is said to have saved the life of his son Humayun by offering his own instead.

Sorcery is also a social science of the primitive people. In the communal form of sorcery, which is attended by a large-scale sacrifice of animals and even humans, the object is the advancement of the tribe, its material prosperity. In human sacrifices, the principle followed is that it is better for one man to die rather than that the whole tribe should perish. In most of these sacrifices, elaborate apologies are tendered to the victim before killing him and after death he is often deified. Even in the large-scale human sacrifices of the American Indians, the object was to save the world by constantly nourishing the sun by means of offering human heart and liver, as otherwise the sun was feared to lose his energy through under-nourishment and hunger; in fact the American Indians have a legend that the sun had once nearly perished through starvation and they had revived him by offering a large number of human victims.

In exorcism, as is well known, the object is to heal the possessed by casting out the possessing spirit, and the communal devil-dancing of South India and Ceylon is intended to save the people from epidemics, famines and droughts by scaring or luring away the demons from the locality affected by their activities.

As a rule, the function of the medicine-man or sorcerer in primitive society is that of the priest in civilised society. There are, no doubt, abuses; some sorcerers misuse their art for love of money or power, or to gain personal ends; but such abuses are not confined to sorcery but pervade all phases of human activity. Even primitive sorcerers have some sort of a code of honour. They undertake to put out evil spirits for the good of the individual or society; when they perform their art to harm an individual, the scrupulous take care to make sure that their clients are victims of injustice or wickedness of powerful individuals against whom they are powerless, due to poverty or any other cause.

In many cases, the office of the sorcerer has been found to be of much practical help. Even when the sorcerer's premises are wrong, because of the widespread belief in his power, his art has been at times effective in gaining its object. In exorcism, mental healing plays a great part; further, I know many cases of wealthy people who have paid off debts to poor tenants, who were unable to collect them

* *Maria Murder and Suicide.*

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by litigation, on some misfortunes befalling them (the wealthy) which, according to rumour, were caused by the activities of sorcerers commissioned by the aggrieved.

Again, it is surprising to note how conclusions drawn from erroneous premises can at times be of practical value. The geocentric system of astronomy (the theory that the earth is stationary and the sun moves round it), as is well known, was followed till the time of Copernicus, yet ancient astronomers could work out a sound calendar and seasonal cycles, calculate the dates of eclipses and make charts for the use of mariners. In fact, the working of astronomy based on the false geocentric hypothesis proved of such practical utility to our ancestors that when Copernicus propounded the theory of a mobile earth he was persecuted by the learned of his time for propagating impious and impossible doctrines.

Further, as we all know, the Law of Gravitation has now been superseded by the Theory of Relativity, but Newton is not to be considered unscientific on that account.

While such wide margins of error exist in what we call exact sciences, the difficulty of fixing standards for social sciences can very well be appreciated.

FUNCTIONS OF THE VILLAGE SORCERER IN INDIA

Practically every village in India, as already stated, has as many sorcerers as there are physicians. They are called Mantrins or Mantravadis and some of the Mantrins are astrologers as well. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the Mantrins of India and the witches of medieval Europe. While the witch was a purely malicious person, indulging in wickedness for its own sake, an agent and instrument of the devil, the functions of the Indian sorcerer can be beneficial; he undertakes to exorcise evil spirits from the possessed, to prevent their attack by means of charms and lockets, to collect bad debts for his clients by sending spirits to haunt the house of the debtor, to grant children to barren women by invoking spirits of fertility, to help a young man win the love of his sweetheart, etc.

Though his function, thus in theory, is benevolent, he is a dreaded individual mainly because of the mysterious powers he wields and the difficulty of detecting his part in activities for which he is considered responsible. Moreover, some unprincipled sorcerers will do anything for money, and an offended one can turn vindictive or malicious. Further, a good part of sorcery consists of Marana, or methods of causing injury through magic, and every village sorcerer is believed to be an adept in this branch of the art.

A poor villager who has a grievance against a rich man usually resorts to the Mantravadi for obtaining justice, and in such cases, the necromancer is ready to help the poor man by causing injury to the rich man. Some of the methods employed by sorcerers have already been indicated in the foregoing pages, and some more will be found in Chapter 4. As a rule, the rich man will not immediately give in if it is known that a sorcerer is at work; for every weapon has a counter-weapon and the activity of one sorcerer can be counteracted by another or by priests who have regular formulae and rituals for preventing and curing evil influences.

Apart from Marana, the services of the sorcerer is in great demand for Vasikarana or to raise love by magic. In India, love-marriages are not so common as

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arranged matches, and in most cases it is the decision of the parents that matters and not of the parties to the marriage. It is, in fact, considered bad form for a young man or woman to confess to love, and in elopements, inter-caste or inter-communal marriages to which parents seldom consent, etc., the sorcerer often has a definite part secretly performed. A neglected wife, a courtesan who wishes to bring down a rival, a young man whose suit is rejected, in fact, any disgruntled person is a potential client of the sorcerer.

Nor is the sorcerer's activity confined to the village and tribal India. Even in the cities and towns in India one at times comes across sign-boards of Mantrins, while several Indian journals carry advertisements of lockets, charms and Kavachas that guarantee success in examinations and fulfilment of similar desired ends.

Sometimes, the sorcerer's art might miss its mark. Once while I was staying in a town in South India, a report spread and found its way to the local newspaper, that a young woman was brought to a hospital with a cobra coiled round her neck, no one being able to disentangle the reptile from her. I was quite interested, and went to see the phenomenon; there was a large crowd at the hospital gate which had been closed, but through the good offices of a doctor whom I knew, I managed to get entry and see the woman. She was in a delirious state and raving. On enquiry I gathered that the woman was the kept mistress of a trader in the town; suspecting that he was breaking off with her, lured by another woman, she had recourse to a sorcerer who had given her a charmed plantain to be given to her lover. At night, expecting the trader, the woman kept the plantain in her room and fell asleep; her man did not turn up that night but a cobra, it would appear, crept into the room and ate the plantain; on this, maddened by love of her, the reptile, it was said, got into her bed and coiled itself round her neck.

There was, however, a factual element in the story. The woman had approached a sorcerer and obtained from him the charmed fruit. It was missing in the morning, probably eaten by a snake which she saw either at night or in the morning, and fright and imagination must have done the rest; for when I visited her, there was no cobra round her neck.

Every village sorcerer assiduously worships some spirit, usually an unprincipled one who would perform errands of evil for food or drink. Usually the spirit is some goblin well known in the locality for his mischievous activities; he is worshipped by the sorcerer by Pujas and prayers and kept in good humour by daily offerings of meat and liquor. He is enshrined in a stone structure in the sorcerer's compound when he wishes to give publicity to his trade, or in a room when he wants to keep his practices secret. The spirit is sent out to possess individuals, cause illness and create confusion in households.

A favourite familiar of sorcerers in Kerala is a spirit called Kutti Chatthan. His images depict him as a warlike individual holding a sword in his right hand and riding, like Yama, the god of death, on a buffalo. He has his central shrine at Avanangode, a village in central Kerala, which is a popular resort of all afflicted by his activities. Any untoward happening in a house, like sudden death, drowning of children, destructive fires, dementia, etc., are attributed to Kutti Chatthan, and the Pontiff at Avanangode undertakes, on payment of the necessary fees, to appease the spirit and bring about relief. Rattling of crockery in a room where there is no crockery, and appearance of filth in edibles or in the kitchen are the most common symptoms in a house haunted by the spirit.

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14. NANDI, THE BULL CHARGER OF SHIVA
He is often invoked in sorcery
(*From* Mysore. *Photo*: S. C. Mehta)

15. VISHNU AND HIS WIFE LAKSHMI
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

16. SHIVA'S GANAS OR IMPS PLAYING WITH HIS BULL NANDI
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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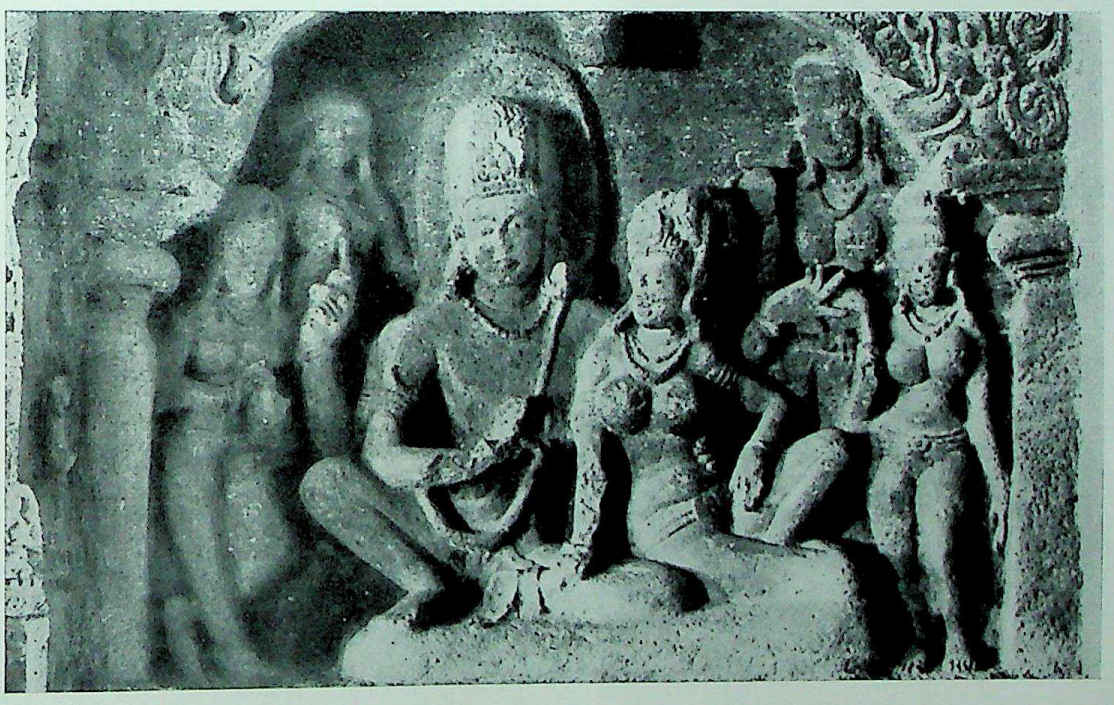

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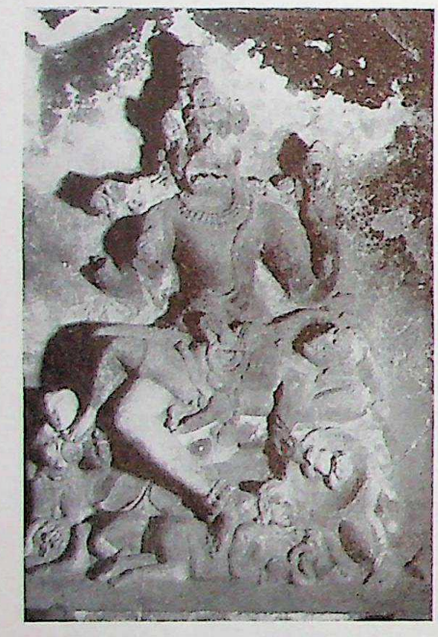
17. NARASIMHA, THE TERRIBLE MAN-LION INCARNATION OF VISHNU
He is widely invoked in sorcery
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

18. ANOTHER SCULPTURE OF NARASIMHA IN ACTION
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)



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19. FLYING GANDHARVAS OR CELESTIAL MUSICIANS
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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20. THE HINDU TRINITY
Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva
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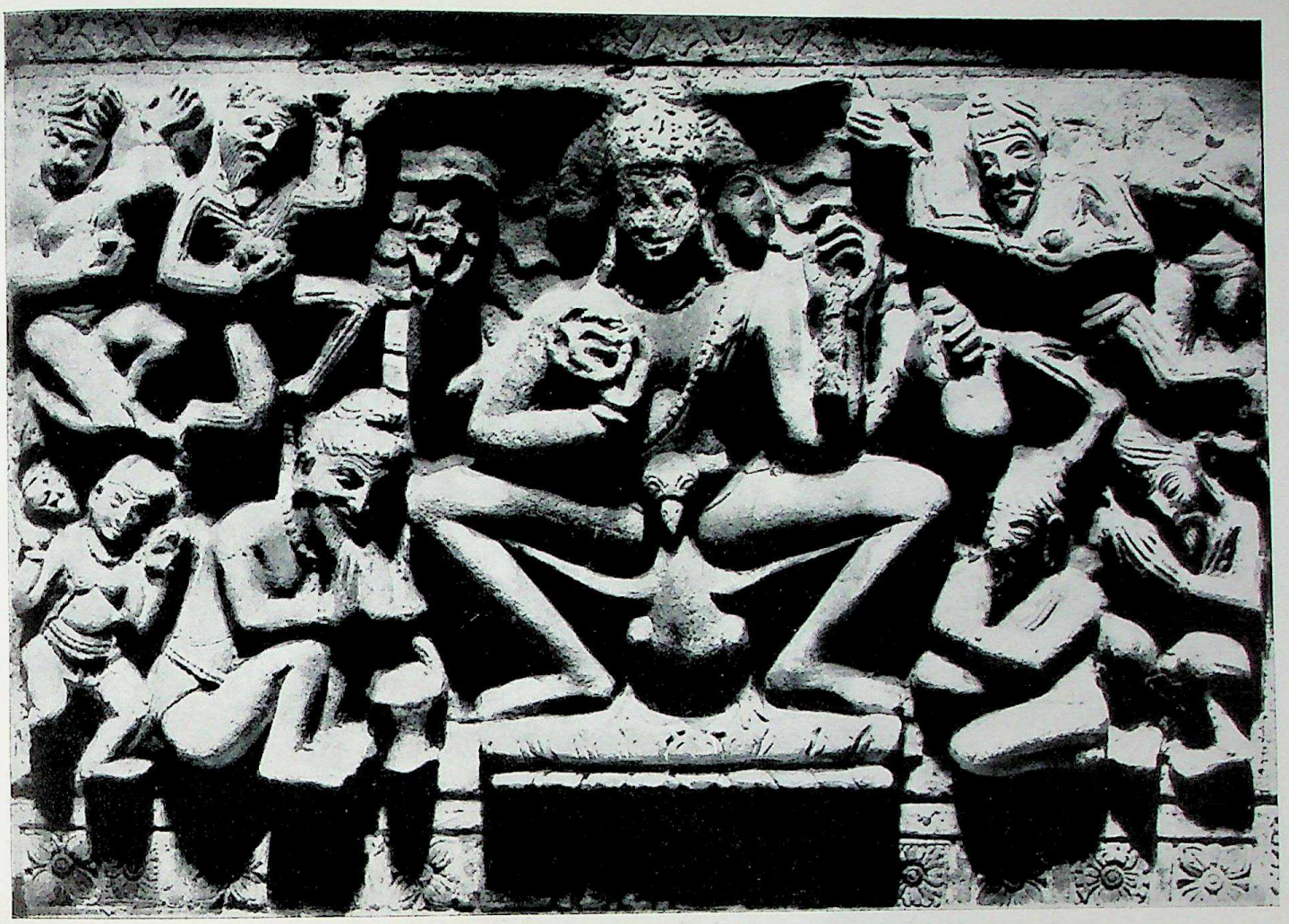

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21. ADORATION OF THE GOD OF WAR
(*From* Aihole. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

22. FLYING CELESTIALS
(*From* Aihole. *Photo*: A. L. Syed)

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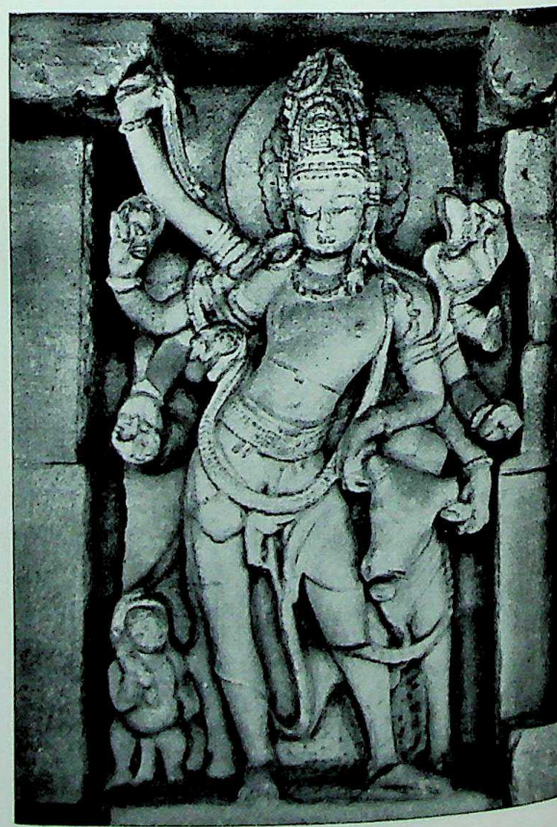
23. GANESHA AND HIS PORTLY WIFE
(*From* Khajuraho. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)



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24. SHIVA FONDLING HIS BULL NANDI
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POSSESSION AND EXORCISM

People generally feel that there is a mysterious cause for all human misfortunes in addition to the apparent cause. A youth may, for instance, die of typhoid but since all men do not die young, it is felt that in addition to typhoid, the immediate cause, there is a hidden or mystic cause for the young man's death. The sophisticated call it Karma, fate, luck, God's will, etc., all, in reality, so many synonyms for ignorance. In primitive logic, no harm can happen without volition, and sickness, death, loss of fortune, etc., are all put down to mysterious beings with volition that live unseen in the world. Dreams and those weird creatures one sees in the semi-wakeful state strengthen primitive man's belief in the existence of these beings.

The various causes of possession have already been dealt with in the previous chapter. Here I shall deal with exorcism or that branch of sorcery intended to force a spirit out of the possessed individual, and the primitive methods employed by exorcists. Before describing an actual case of exorcism I witnessed, it may be mentioned here that the chief methods of exorcism employed by sorcerers in India are three:

1. Luring the spirit out of the possessed. For this purpose, food, drink, flowers and other articles, supposed to be favoured of the spirit, are kept in a mystic design, a few feet away from the victim and the sorcerer invites the spirit into the design and carries him away to some uninhabited place; if the sorcerer wishes to let loose the spirit on an enemy of his, he takes the spirit to the house of his enemy and leaves it in the house to torment the inmates. If food and drink do not provide inducements strong enough for the spirit to leave the possessed, the sorcerer tries to lure the spirit into his person by donning grotesque masks, yelling and leaping like a demon, and by other activities likely to establish kinship with the spirit. It is in devil-dancing that this type of exorcism is widely used.

2. Driving out the spirit by threats. In this type of exorcism, the victim is brought close to the sorcerer and instead of desirable food and drink, the spirit is offered repugnant things or shown charmed articles dreaded by spirits. The idea is the same as offering incense or holy water to the devil. The primitive Indian sorcerer often uses a good deal of bad language against the spirit and its ancestors, especially its mother, and at times even bares his thighs. When these threats prove of no avail, the sorcerer has recourse to blows and, at times, the poor victim is mercilessly beaten.

3. Catching the spirit unawares and removing it to a safe place. This is generally done by sorcerers in India while the victim is sleeping. In this state the victim is temporarily left alone by the spirit who is believed to be resting near by. The sorcerer usually keeps hiding in the house or in the compound waiting for the victim to fall asleep; narcotics like opium are at times administered to induce deep slumber. When the victim is dead asleep, the sorcerer creeps in and, by a charmed bag, nets in the unsuspecting spirit and hurries out of the house.

Exorcism is practised both openly and in secret. When the possessed is a child the exorcist usually deals with the victim in presence of other people and even invited guests; feasts in temples are occasions for bringing in the possessed and exorcising evil spirits by the aid of deities. The practice has found favour with some Christian communities of the Syrian persuasion in Kerala; during the feasts of saints in certain churches, it is a general practice even now to bring the possessed before the images of saints to cast out the devils.

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Such public exorcism cannot, for obvious reasons, be performed in the case of the respectable, or when the victim is a girl of marriageable age, for fear of scandal and hence in these cases the matter is kept a secret and an exorcist is commissioned to perform the rite as quietly as possible in the night in some out of the way place.

I have witnessed several cases of exorcism, both public and secret. In the secret rites of the low castes the exorcist is often an impecunious individual who is quite prepared, when well paid, to give the curious much information about his profession. The great thing in exorcism, an informant told me, is to find out what exact type of spirit has possessed the victim; spirits that are vegetarian are likely to be repelled by offerings of blood and meat, whereas carnivorous or cannibalistic spirits remain indifferent to offerings of fruits and milk. A study of symptoms may help but is not always conclusive. Hence a sorcerer keeps himself well informed about the spirits that haunt the locality in which he operates; he takes note of men who had committed suicide or suffered violent death, of women who had died in pregnancy or childbirth, as well as of river-nymphs and hill-spirits, and above all, of malicious spirits worshipped by other sorcerers and sent out on missions of mischief.

I shall now describe, for the benefit of the reader, the case of an exorcism-rite performed in secret by a sorcerer of low caste who allowed me to witness it from a hiding place; this rite is more or less a typical example of what is generally performed in South India.

A young woman suddenly went mental, and woke up one morning, raving. Her parents, common labourers on the farm of a well-to-do landlord, were naturally quite upset; she was their eldest daughter, used to work in the fields with them and was an earning member of the family. They had two other children, two boys aged ten and eight. On the night the exorcism ceremony was to be performed, the boys were sent away to a relative's house and only the parents remained with the young woman. She was about seventeen years of age, and marriage proposals were in the air. Under these circumstances, the anxiety of the parents to keep the matter secret was but natural.

The ceremony started at about 11 p.m., and I was seated on a rock well hidden by cactus, about 100 feet away from the site which was under a tree that stood in front of a hut situated in a lonesome place, on the fringe of a paddy-field. There was no moonlight, but the September sky was clear and starlit. A kerosene lamp in the verandah of the hut tried to dispel the gloom around in vain.

The sorcerer appeared with a bag and sat on the ground under the tree. He took out a brass lamp from the bag, holding seven wicks, poured oil and lit all the seven wicks. One after another he started taking out several things from the bag—flowers, pastes, fruits, arrack, meat, knives, scarfs and finally a cock with its legs tied; the bird started crying and he smothered it with a scarf.

The exorcist was a stocky middle-aged individual with a beard of about a month's growth, hairy chest, long hair and wild, red eyes. He was dressed in a loin cloth, neither dirty nor clean. He took out a red scarf from the bag and tied it as a waistband, and its loose ends waved in the air as he moved.

He sat on his haunches and drew a Mandala or mystic diagram in turmeric; it was something of a circle about two feet in radius divided into several mansions of unequal dimensions. Then, repeating incantations, he placed flowers, milk, honey, flour, etc., in the several mansions of the Mandala and a small image of some

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godling which he worshipped. He now took his hand-bell, squatted facing the hut, with the lamp and the Mandala in front of him; he sat there for quite a couple of minutes muttering prayers with closed eyes, still holding the hand-bell. The bell now began to tinkle and his body started quivering, the bell ringing as if by the action of the quiver of the hand. He stopped his prayer and called out to the patient to come out, addressing her by name. The girl uttered mournful sounds from the hut which were indicative of refusal. On this, the sorcerer got up, the bell rang wildly, and in a commanding tone the exorcist ordered the girl to come out. I saw her now in the verandah, led by her parents, and they sort of pushed her into the yard. She was a well-proportioned, healthy girl with full and firm breasts, naked except for a loin cloth; she had luxuriant dishevelled hair and a wild look in her eyes. The seven-wick lamp threw sufficient light to enable me to see the victim, the sorcerer and the proceedings. The parents of the girl stood in the verandah. The girl came to the sorcerer, near the Mandala, but avoided looking into his face.

The exorcist took the wick-lamp from near the Mandala and waved it round the head of the victim much in the same manner as Indo-Aryan ritualists do Arati. He then placed the lamp back in its original position, and with the bell in hand started circumambulating the girl and the Mandala, repeating incantations. The girl was doing a wavy movement of her head suggestive of reeling.

After the seventh round of circumambulation, the sorcerer suddenly stopped and, dramatically throwing away the hand-bell, made a violent gesture pointing his right index finger towards the Mandala. He then moved to the other side, which had the desired effect of bringing the Mandala and the lamp between himself and the victim. He now started making a series of beckoning gestures with both his hands with the obvious intention, I thought, of making the girl step into the Mandala. The victim stood rooted to her post, only her head waving, and eyes shifting.

The exorcist, by a violent movement, caught the cock by his left hand, held the legs of the bird by his teeth and, taking the knife from the ground, cut the neck of the bird by a dexterous movement which left its head in his left hand; as the blood streamed forth, he threw away the knife and poured it hot into the Mandala. The pouring of arrack followed. The terrified woman, though ordered to enter the Mandala by the sorcerer who used his threatening finger violently, stood stupefied, immobile.

Now the technique changed. It was clear that all attempts at coaxing and luring had failed. The sorcerer drank what arrack was left over in the bottle and made a deep guttural sound. He pulled out a pair of magic cudgels from his bag and armed with these started pacing up and down. I could see his flesh creep in the flickering light. His steps became quicker, more violent. His expression changed into the diabolic, and I could see the poor woman writhing under his ferocious gaze. With a sudden yell and an unearthly noise made by the clanging of the cudgels, the man leapt in front of the girl, and shaking the cudgels into her face asked, with clenched teeth: "Who are you?"

The loud question was repeated thrice.

"I won't say," she said. This was a complete surprise to me. I expected the woman to fall unconscious terror-stricken. The attitude of the sorcerer was such that I myself was feeling uneasy, though seated at a safe distance from him. Yet the woman seemed to have picked up courage from the terror-laden atmosphere.

The frenzied dance of the sorcerer became more violent, the yells more fearsome

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and the clanging of the cudgels louder. After many refusals, the woman, or rather the spirit that possessed her, agreed to confess. A series of questions and answers now followed, the sorcerer relentlessly pursuing his advantage, the woman writhing while answering.

The gist of the confession of the spirit was that it was the ghost of a man who had hanged himself on a tree a few years ago, and that at nightfall when the girl was going alone that way a few days back, it possessed her. Under threats from the sorcerer the ghost agreed to leave the victim. As a sign of his departure, he consented to blow out the wick-lamp; and as soon as the girl did this, she fell down exhausted.

In the weak light of the naked lamp in the verandah of the hut I could see the parents of the girl approaching and lifting her and leading her to the cottage. The sorcerer sat down reclining on the trunk of the tree as he too was quite exhausted, as anyone would be after such a performance.

I looked at my watch; it was twenty minutes past twelve. I heard the howl of a jackal in the distance. I got up and with the aid of the torch I was carrying, walked to my residence hoping that the ghost would not come straying my way.

Next day I made some enquiries in the matter. It is true that a man had hanged himself some five years back at the site mentioned by the girl, and the fact was known to her as well as to the villagers. I saw the girl the next day; she was looking very tired but her parents said she was better and almost normal.

I cannot say if the ghost had an independent existence apart from the girl's imagination; but the fact remains that she went mental and did make a statement that she was possessed by the ghost of the man who had committed suicide. It is quite possible that her pathological condition was psychological, and it is equally possible that for such conditions curative methods adopted by sorcerers are effective.

Anyway, it must be mentioned that such cases of exorcism are matters of daily occurrence in Indian villages at present, and in many instances cures for mental conditions have been effected through the agency of the sorcerer.

Another important fact that has come to my notice in studying cases of possession is that the majority of the victims are women. One explanation advanced by rationalists is that women are more prone to hysteria than men. The reason given by sorcerers on the other hand is that women and children have less resistance against the attacks of spirits than men.

ORACLES AND THE SPIRITS OF ANCESTORS

If we are to believe Herbert Spencer, "the rudimentary form of all religions is the propitiation of dead ancestors who are supposed to be still existing and to be capable of working good or evil to their descendants." A good part of this belief is due to the inability of primitive people to comprehend the phenomenon of death or annihilation. To them death is inexplicable and immortality is the natural state; and the line dividing the dead from the living is vague. In dreams the shades of the departed commune with the living, and confirm beliefs that the dead have not ceased to exist.

Ancestor worship is to some extent a projection of filial affection and duty, and as such is common to all races. Even in religions inclined to irrevocably fix the fate of the departed, the building of tombs, masses and prayers said for the

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dead, etc., are all in a way, survivals of ancient beliefs in the immortality of the dead. Further, the reverence even enlightened moderns pay their departed ancestors, the portraits kept in their memory, the *in memoria* in graveyards and in columns of newspapers, all speak of a frame of mind inclined to immortalise the dead.

Pure uninhibited ancestor-worship obtains in many parts of India among the aborigines. Misfortunes to the tribe such as pestilence, famines, droughts, etc., are attributed to the wrath of offended ancestors. Ill-luck to individuals is also traced to the same source. The ancestors, however, do not possess the living as ghosts and evil spirits do.

In front of practically every hut among the aborigines and the low castes among the Hindus, can be seen a couple of stones propped up against the trunk of a tree or any other convenient spot in the compound; these stones represent the ancestors of the household and the pious take care to offer to them, in small shell cups, portions of their daily meal before the members of the household take their meals; on special occasions, palm wine or other beverages are served to the ancestors.

Among many aboriginal tribes and castes, feasts are periodically held at public expense to ascertain the wishes of ancestors and seek their guidance in the affairs of the living. These feasts are usually held at night and a good deal of palm wine is consumed on the occasion. After the party has drunk well, and as discussions on important matters proceed, some one (not necessarily the priest) noted for his proved abilities to commune with the dead or a novice wishing to prophesy, shows signs of restlessness and eventually leaps into frenzied activity. He then starts prophesying or warns the congregation of possible dangers arising out of transgression of the codes of ancestors; the matters generally receiving notice by the oracle, who is believed to be possessed by the spirit of some ancestor, are neglect by the caste or tribe of feasts and ceremonials in honour of the dead, and lapses on the part of individuals.

Apart from spiritual matters, the members of the assembly ask the oracle questions concerning their material needs and difficulties: where one's missing cattle had strayed, why one's wife had run away with another man, etc. The answers to such queries are not always clear but rather indicated by gestures or enigmatic utterances. For instance, in a feast held in honour of the dead among a community of Parayans, in which I was present, one of the elders in the congregation asked the oracle where his white cow, which was missing for about a week at the time, had strayed. The reply, after a minute's thoughtful pause, was an indication by the right index finger in a northerly direction and a laconic "north", signifying that the animal had gone that way and the search was to be made in that direction.

Oracles are regular features in many South Indian temples at present. In Kerala they are known as Velichappad, and are consulted by persons in difficulty on many matters such as causes of illnesses, loss of fortune, the names and whereabouts of thieves and criminals in hiding, etc. These oracles are not, however, possessed by the spirits of ancestors but by the presiding deity of the shrine.

In Indo-Aryan religions, Pitris or departed ancestors have an honoured place. But unlike the ancestors of the aborigines, they are, more or less, passive recipients of oblations offered by their progeny on earth, and seldom interfere with the affairs of humans. The Pitris, as we have seen, stand in greater need of help from people on earth than the latter of the former, as the correct performance of funeral rites

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and periodical ceremonies, known as Shraddhas, provide departed ancestors with the proper intervenient frame and nourishment which make their sojourn in the ethereal regions tolerable, if not happy. If these ceremonies are not performed, it is certainly a dereliction of duty, but the defaulter is seldom visited by the direct ire of the offended ancestor, but degenerates into a sinner. "Let the householder who knows his duty," says Manu, the Hindu law-giver, "perform each day a Shraddha with boiled rice and the like, with water or with milk, edible roots and fruits, for thus he obtains favours from departed ancestors." The money spent on Shraddhas never goes in vain; for even if the particular individual for whom the rite is performed is not in a position to receive the benefit, other members of Pitri Loka (regions of manes) avail themselves of it, and the performer of the Shraddha acquires religious merit. As a rule, a man is expected to perform Shraddhas for ancestors reaching back to the third generation only.

DEVIL-DANCING

The object of devil-dancing as it is practised in South India and Ceylon is not so much to scare as to lure or appease the demon. The devil-dancer, by means of grotesque masks and wild dances, tries to lure the demon that has possessed an individual or haunted a locality and to take him to a distant place, out of harm's way.

The idea here, again, is that like objects attract the like. Demons are believed to be as hideous as they are evil minded, and the devil-dancer, by fearsome masks and gesticulations, impersonates the demon and tries to establish kinship with him in order to lure him. Another peculiarity of demons, as conceived by primitive peoples throughout the world, is that they are particularly fond of violent dances and any strong-muscled individual who can execute frenzied movements is at once accepted as a friend and kinsman by the demons.

In individual cases of possession, a professional devil-dancer is engaged; the ceremonies take place at night, by torch light. The dancer wears grotesque masks, yells, indulges in wild movements, kills several cocks, drinks fresh blood and eats raw meat in order to make himself as demoniac as possible. After about an hour's dancing to the accompaniment of fierce, discordant drum-beating, the dancer falls into a trance. In this state, the demon is supposed to have entered the body of the dancer; he has now the gift of prophecy and onlookers may ask him questions concerning their troubles, and he replies to them like an oracle.

In certain parts of India and Ceylon, the devil-dancer, on being possessed by the demon and falling into a trance, is removed on a stretcher to a deserted, far-off place and there left to recover. The idea is that the demon that possessed the dancer has been effectively transferred to a strange place. After recovery, the dancer usually walks back to the village and collects his fees.

In times of epidemics, famines or drought involving large-scale hardships or destruction of life and property, villagers organise devil-dances at public expense, engaging a number of dancers, the idea being that the area is haunted by groups of demons to tackle which a solo performance will not be enough. Hence, the services of professionals and novices are requisitioned for the purpose and the orgies take place at a public place. The dancers come in groups attired in fantastic costumes and demoniac masks, arm themselves with strange weapons and indulge in violent rhythmic movements to the accompaniment of sky-rending shrieks, yells, howls and the discordant notes of tom-toms; blood of animals and birds flow in streams,

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and the more excitable of the dancers bite cocks to death and smear their faces and bodies with blood. They create, in short, a pandemonium for the demons to revel in. After thus impersonating the demons and luring them into their bodies, the dancers run to hills and forests and there discharge their demoniac burdens.

In the grotesque masks, the violent rhythms and the general atmosphere of pandemonium created, the devil-dancing of South India offers a striking parallel to some of the ritualistic dances of Tibetan Lamas. But there is a difference in motive: the Lamaistic dancers impersonate terror-inspiring forms of the deities of the Buddhist pantheon and try to intimidate or scare the demons by a show of their superior powers as gods who, if they chose, could be more fearsome than demons. But in the devil-dances of South India, the object, as already stated, is to lure and not to scare the demons.

LYCANTHROPY

The belief that human beings can transform themselves by magic into animals was very strong in the ancient world. Such beliefs were confirmed by a feeling that some humans have predominating animal natures in them. Further, in all ages and climes certain animals at least have been considered better than men; in the legends and literature of India, for instance, the lion, the elephant, and the bull have been particularly extolled, and exceptionally gifted men have been designated as "bull among men," "lion among men," "elephant among men," etc. It is also noteworthy that a great many countries, which we now consider civilised, have, like the totems of savages, animals and birds as their national emblems.

Anyway, the belief in the ability of human beings to turn themselves into animals was fairly universal at one time. In Europe, such people were known as werwolves and stories of their wickedness still persist in the legends and folklore of that continent. Among certain Africans, medicine men are believed to be capable of transforming themselves into lions at will. The Nagas believe that sorcerers assume tiger forms to kill people in order to avoid suspicion of a human agency.

Verrier Elwin, whose splendid work among primitive peoples of India made him an authority on the subject, gives many interesting accounts of such beliefs that came to his notice. "The Maria Sorcerer may turn into an animal and attack his foe in wild and bestial guise. . . . At Khutepal I was told, 'how a man there could transform himself into a tiger. He would then lie hid in a jungle and when any human being or cow came by, he used to kill and devour the victim. He then took his human form again, and came home and lay with his wife.' After he had thus killed some five or six people, the villagers finally summed up courage to track down the tiger and kill it. A watch was kept and one day to their surprise and horror, they saw the man actually changing into a tiger and then back to human form. They rushed at him and killed him instantly. Similar stories were told me in Dhurli, but here they said it was most common for such things to happen in the great zamindari of Jeypore. It is generally believed that if a were-tiger is injured, similar marks will appear on the human body of the man who has possessed it . . . . Indeed, many Maria believe that no animal or snake will ever attack a human being unless it is incited to do so by magic. There are many stories of how people have been attacked by bears and tigers on this account."*

Stories of the ability of sorcerers to convert themselves or others into animals

* *Maria Murder and Suicide.*

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or birds are found in the romances and legendary lore of India. Thus, the women of Kama Rupa, an ancient kingdom in East India, were considered great magicians, and they had an ill repute for converting handsome young men into birds and carrying them in cages in order to take their pleasure with them when they chose.

Certain low castes in India used to follow lycanthropy as a traditional occupation, undertaking to kill or injure people on payment. The Panans and Parayans of South India were professional lycanthropes; though at present the castes engage themselves in other occupations, traditions die hard in India and it is widely believed that at least some members of them still practise lycanthropy.

Lycanthropy is known in South India as Odi and the man who practises it as Odiyan. Two magic balms are mentioned as capable of turning men into beasts. One is known as Pilla Thailam (infant oil) and the other as Angola Thailam (Angola oil). These are prepared in the following manner:

"The chief ingredient in the preparation of Pilla Thailam is the sixth or seventh month's foetus of a primipara who should belong to a caste other than that of the sorcerer. To obtain this, the Odiyan, having satisfied himself that the omens are favourable, sets out at midnight for the house of the woman selected as his victim, and walks several times round it, waving a coconut shell containing a mixture of lime and turmeric water, and muttering incantations to secure the aid of the deity. He then draws cabbalistic diagrams on the ground. By these means the woman is compelled to come out of the house. Even if the door of the house is locked, she will bang her head against it and force it open. The sorcerer leads her to a retired spot, strips her naked and extracts the foetus and collects it in a vessel made of gourd. Care is taken that the foetus does not touch the ground as the potency of the drug would thereby be ruined. The foetus is cut to pieces and smoked over a fire. It is then placed in a vessel provided with a few holes below which is another vessel. The two are placed in a larger receptacle filled with water which is heated over a fire. From the foetus a liquid exudes which is collected in the lower vessel. A human skull is then reduced to fine powder which is mixed with a portion of the liquid. With the mixture a mark is made on the forehead of the sorcerer who rubs some of it over various parts of his body, and drinks a small quantity of cow-dung water. He then thinks that he can assume the form of any animal he likes and achieve his object in view, be it murder or bodily injury."*

The method of preparing the Angola Thailam is less objectionable. The Angola tree (*Alangium Lamarckii*) bears a large number of fruits in season, and one particular fruit of every tree is believed to possess magical properties. This fruit, on dark nights, detaches itself from the stalk, descends to the ground, takes a stroll and climbs back to its original position on the tree. Sorcerers keep vigil at the foot of the tree and catches the magic fruit when it descends to the ground. The Angola Thailam is then prepared in the same manner as Pilla Thailam, the fruit being used instead of the foetus.

"When a person has an enemy whom he wishes to get rid of, the Odiyan is consulted, and the name of the enemy given to him. Identifying his residence, the Odiyan starts off on a dark night and anyone who comes across is at once dispatched with a blow. The victim comes out of his house in a state of stupefaction and the sorcerer puts him to death either by a blow on the head or by suffocating him with two sticks applied to the neck." †

* L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Ethnological Survey of Cochin.*

† Ibid.

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25. NAGA AND MAITHUNA FIGURES
(*From* Konarak. *Photo*: P. Braham)

26. NAGA AND MAITHUNA FIGURES
(*From* Konarak. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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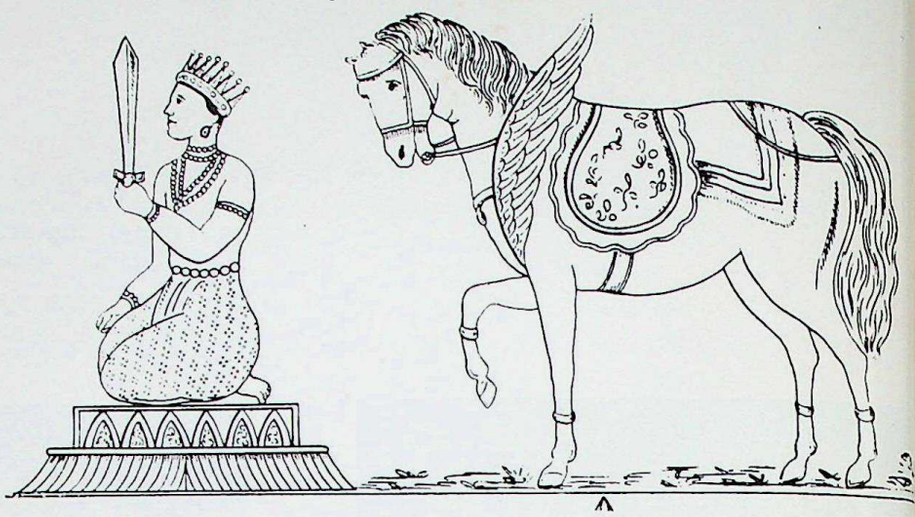
27. MASK OF SHIVA
(*From* Havell's *Benares the Sacred City*)

28. GARUDA MASK
Garuda is the Man-Bird charger of Vishnu
(*Photo*: M. P. Poulos)



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29. KALKI, THE TENTH INCARNATION OF VISHNU
He is to appear at the end of the present Kali age to destroy the world
(*From* Coleman's *The Mythology of the Hindus*)

30. MAHAKALI (GREAT KALI), THE GODDESS OF TERROR
(*From* Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*)

31. PARASURAMA OR RAMA OF THE AXE
The 6th Brahmin incarnation of Vishnu. He is said to have destroyed the whole race of Kshatriyas to avenge the killing of his father by a king
(*From* Coleman's *The Mythology of the Hindus*)

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32. TODAS, A HILL TRIBE OF THE NILGIRIS
(*From* Urwick's *Indian Pictures*)

33. A SOUTH INDIAN DEVIL-DANCER
(*From* Thurston's *Castes & Tribes of Southern India*)

34. A TIGER MASK

35. MASK OF A DEVIL-DANCER
(*From* Thurston's *Castes & Tribes of Southern India*)

36. SORCERY FIGURE
(*From* Thurston's *Castes & Tribes of Southern India*)

37. A SORCERER WITH THE PARAPHERNALIA OF HIS PROFESSION

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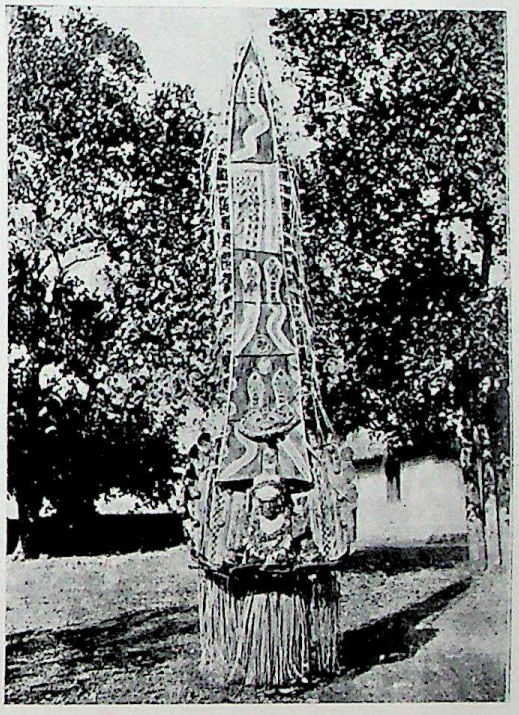

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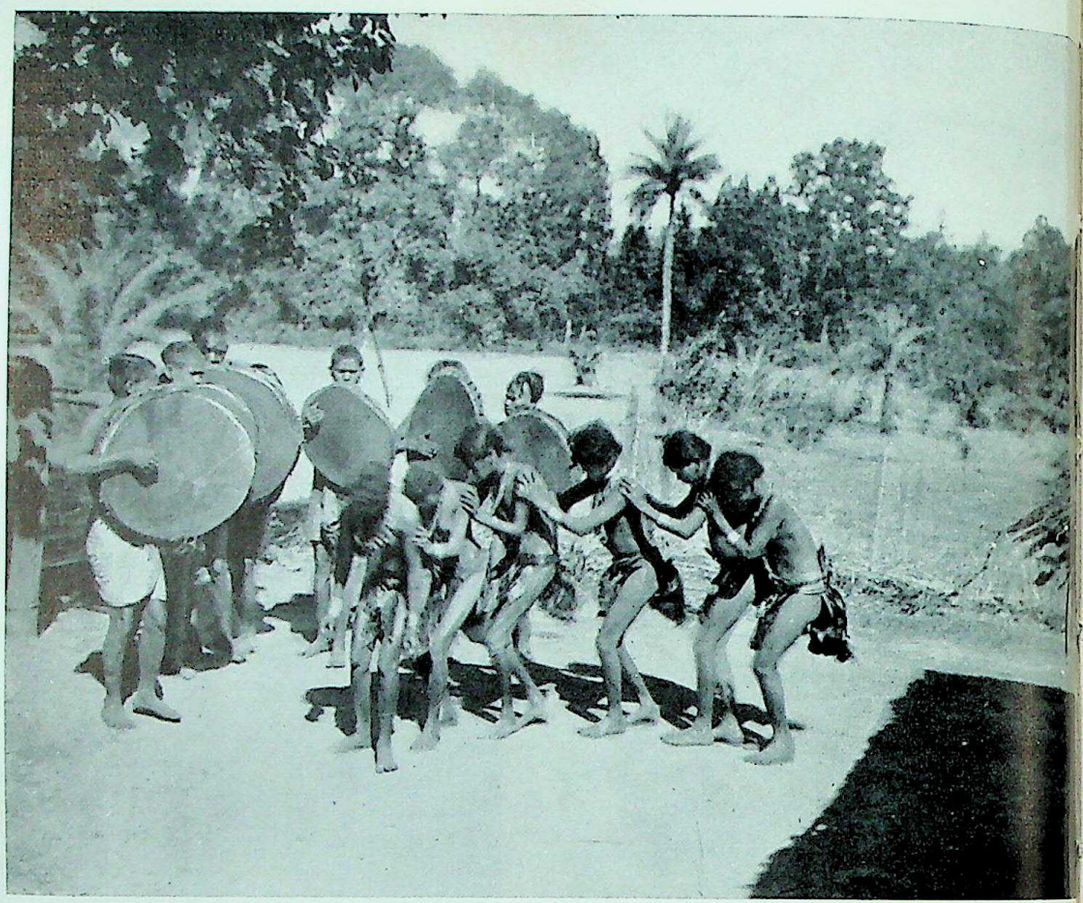

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38. MARIA BISON DANCER FROM BASTAR
(*Photo*: B. Bhansali)

39. A TRIBAL DANCE

40. A VILLAGE SORCERER
(*Photo*: B. Bhansali)

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Till the British established the rule of the law, the Odiyans were the terror of villagers in many parts of South India; among Adivasis who live in the hills or on the borders of remote villages, the belief in the activities of Odiyans is still very strong. The efficacy of embryos for concocting magical potions is believed in by almost all primitive sorcerers and they still try to obtain this rare commodity; for obvious reasons, poor women who live in out of the way places without male relatives or husbands, low caste women who have gone astray and have conceived, and women who approach sorcerers for abortion in cases of illegitimate conception, are usually made victims for obtaining the embryos.

Though I have contacted some individuals reputed to be lycanthropes, I must confess I have not been able to get out of them any details of their trade. Though much information can be obtained about the practice of sorcery generally, secrets of lycanthropy are jealously guarded because of the crime it involves. I may, however, mention that in the hut of a man I visited (he had an evil reputation for practising sorcery) I found, among other paraphernalia of sorcery, a pair of sharp bullock horns and several animal masks.

I should think the power of the lycanthrope is much exaggerated, the man himself encouraging propaganda about the diabolic powers he wields. From what I have gathered, I should think the lycanthrope dons the mask of an animal and, just as the devil-dancer impersonates the demon, by anointing himself with Pilla Thailam and other magic balms and possibly by heavy drinking, works himself into a condition of mind in which he imagines himself the beast he impersonates; he then prowls about at night and causes injury or death to his unfortunate victim. In fact, his appearance in beast mask would be in itself sufficient to unnerve an ordinary individual who meets him alone in some by-lane or lonely place and the rest of the work of the lycanthrope would be easy.

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3. *Indo-Aryan Magic and Mantra*

THE ARYANS who invaded India some three thousand years ago and settled down in the Indo-Gangetic plain had a simple religion. Their deities were mostly lords of the firmament; invoking them by hymns sung in their praise, and communal drinking of Soma, an exhilarating beverage, formed the main items of worship. The people of India whom they conquered had in all probability a more elaborate ritual in which magic formed an important part. At first, it would appear the Aryans were inimical or contemptuous of the ways of the indigenous population, their religion and practices, but in course of time they had perforce to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards them as there were powerful chiefs among them whom the Aryans had to recognize and treat as equals. Further, the Aryans who settled down in India, the Indo-Aryans as they are called, were themselves subjected to periodical invasions from the north-west and north-east, and these warlike conquerors, though culturally backward, had to be assimilated into the Indian social order and their religion and social theories were absorbed by the Indo-Aryans. This process of assimilation continued for centuries in india and led to the growth of a religious synthesis seldom found in any other part of the world. The Brahmins, as the priestly class among the Indo-Aryans and the custodians of the sacred texts that could make the gods do the will of men, were honoured by all and they, in their turn, guided all religious groups and performed for them services which were believed to confer material prosperity and religious merit.

As this synthesis developed, the Brahmins, with their characteristic interest in mysterious subjects, made a thorough study of the magical practices of the several races incorporated in Hinduism. Applying this knowledge for the material and spiritual needs of the community, they evolved a highly elaborate system of magic; much of it, no doubt, is derived from aboriginal cults. In fact, Indo-Aryan magical rituals stand in the same relation to primitive sorcery as advanced Hinduism to the fetishes of the lower castes. Anyway, the system of magic thus evolved was found so useful that it received the sanction of all orthodox schools of Hindu thought, and was even recognized as a regular department of state in ancient and medieval India; kings had under their pay adepts who could read omens for starting an expedition, frustrate the design of enemies or dement them and wither away invading armies by magic. While such was the belief of the king and the court in magic, the credulity of the common folk in the efficacy of magic to achieve the impossible was almost unbounded.

Nor is this belief a thing of the past like the fear of witchcraft of medieval Europe. In India, magic as we have already seen, is a living art, widely practised by professionals.

Unlike primitive sorcery which is solely dependent upon oral tradition, Indo-

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Aryan magic has regular text books. Few of these have been published, but many of them are available to the initiated. For much of Indo-Aryan sorcery, like primitive black arts, is orally transmitted from Guru to disciple and the discipline is too strict and elaborate to be learned from mere texts, the supervision of an adept being considered necessary till the disciple becomes proficient enough to work independently.

The later Vedic religion had specialised in rituals and sacrifices, and some of its exegetical works deal with magic. The Vedic religion has, however, fallen into disuse in India, and the present orthodox religion is known as Puranic, being mainly based on the *Puranas*, voluminous works, eighteen in number. Some of the *Puranas* and the fourth Veda known as *Atharva*, deal with sorcery in some detail, but the most elaborate details and systematic expositions of the art will be found in texts known as *Tantras*, *Yamalas* and *Rahasyas*, the esoteric scriptures of the Tantrics, an influential secret sect of Hindus. (For the Tantric cults see Chapter 9.)

Sorcery, as dealt with in these texts, is practised by means of the following five arms: (1) Mantras or spells, (2) Yantras or cabalistic diagrams, (3) Mudras or gestures, (4) Drugs of magical potency, and (5) Direct action as and when necessary.

MANTRAS

Mantras may be considered the most important arm of sorcery. In fact, Indo-Aryan sorcery is known as Mantra Sastra or Science of Mantras.

The idea that the word, written or spoken, is eternal and of magic potency is one of the primary Hindu beliefs connected with ritual and sorcery. A mystic formula repeated with the correct emphasis on the proper word and the correct accent on the required syllable is thought to be almost omnipotent. The conception is allied to the Greek idea of "Logos" and the "Word Made Flesh" mystery of the New Testament. In all orthodox Hindu scriptures the power of spells is emphasised at every step. Not only spirits, demons and minor gods are controlled by Mantras, but even the great members of the Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are said to be influenced by spells, and a Brahmin well versed in Mantra Sastra is considered capable of controlling even gods.

The celebrated Vedic Mantra, Gayatri, is a favourite of all Brahmins and is repeated daily by them, and by its power the sage Viswamitra is said to have successfully challenged Brahma himself. The "Om Mani Padme Hum" formula of Lamaistic Buddhism is another celebrated Mantra known throughout the world and constantly repeated by certain denominations of Buddhists as particularly efficacious in combating evil influences and attaining spiritual perfection.

The Mantras used by Mantrins and sorcerers are slightly different. The deities invoked are usually goddesses of the Tantric pantheon or some manifestation of Shiva and the object is mainly the attainment of occult power or material gain; the occult power thus obtained, no doubt, can be used to attain Nirvana or liberation as all power is essentially the same and can be used for various purposes, good or bad, but as a rule the immediate object of Tantric Mantras is the attainment of some material object through magic.

According to Tantric literature, each deity, demon or spirit has a particular Mantra. We have already seen in the first chapter that the number of deities in the Hindu pantheon is more than thirty-three crores (three hundred and thirty

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millions), while the demons, Nagas and other beings are even more numerous; each of these can have a Mantra of his or her own, and as such the possible number of Mantras will work out into astronomical figures, and one life-time will not suffice to master even a considerable portion of them.

All these Mantras are not, however, revealed to humans. According to the *Tantras*, the number of known Mantras is seventy millions. These are called Mula Mantras or "root-Mantras." The composition of a Mantra has, for its basis, certain mysterious qualities its sound and script are said to possess, which have magical relationship with sentient beings. The vowels of the Indian alphabet known as "A-Varga" are, for instance, favoured of celestials. The mystic monosyllable "AUM" (or Om as it is generally written) is composed of three sounds and represents the Trinity; "A" is the mystic sound of Brahma, "U" of Vishnu and "aM" of Shiva.

Similarly, the first group of consonants beginning with Ka and known as "Ka-Varga,"* is favoured of that division of demons known as Daityas. Of the other groups of consonants, "Cha-Varga" is of the Nagas, "Ta-Varga" of Gandharvas, "Tha-Varga" of Rishis (sages), "Pa-Varga" of those demons known as Rakshasas, and "Ya-Varga" of Pisachas. The "Sha-Varga" pertains to humans.

Further, each Mantra has a Bija (literally, seed); these Bijas are mystical letters or syllables, invented for the sake of brevity, to denote Mula Mantras and their deities, and are in extensive use in invocations and in the complicated art of composing secondary Mantras from Mula Mantras. In the general practice of sorcery, the Bija of a deity is more widely used than the Mantra, and hence, the Bija is, more or less, identified with the deity whose "seed-Mantra" it is. Thus "Aing" is the Bija of Sarasvati, wife of Brahma, "Shring" of Lakshmi, wife of Vishnu, "Hring" of the wife of Shiva, "Kling" of Kama, the love-god, "Hrim" of the sun-god, "Lam" of the goddess of earth, and so on and so forth.

The *Tantras* give detailed instructions for converting a Mula Mantra into several subsidiary Mantras by prefixing, affixing or interspersing Bijas in order to serve particular occasions or varying purposes. An illustration given in the *Mahanirvana Tantra* will be helpful in understanding the principles of derivation of subsidiary Mantras from Mula Mantras.

One of the Mula Mantras, pertaining to Brahmam, the Supreme Being, is: Aum Sach Chit Ekam Brahmam.† This Mantra can be used for obtaining any or all the four objects of life, namely, Dharma (religious merit), Artha (wealth), Kama (pleasure) and Moksha (liberation). By removing the prefix Aum (this is known as the Pranava in Mantra Sastra and is something of a common factor in many Mantras) and substituting for it the Bija "Aing", the Mantra can be

* The consonants of the Indian alphabet are divided into seven Vargas or groups, each of five letters, and called after the first letter of the group. These Vargas are:

1. Ka-Varga, consisting of Ka, kKha, Ga, gGha, nGa.
2. Cha-Varga, consisting of Cha, cCha, Ja, jJha, nJa.
3. Ta-Varga, consisting of Ta, tTha, Da, dDha, Na.
4. Tha-Varga, consisting of Tha, thTha, Dha, dhDha, Na.
5. Pa-Varga, consisting of Pa, pPha, Ba, bBha, Ma.
6. Ya-Varga, consisting of Ya, Ra, La, Va, Śa.
7. Sha-Varga, consisting of Sha, Sa, Ha, La, Ksha.

† This Mantra is known as Brahma Mantra and its literal meaning is, "the-one-being-consciousness-Brahmam"; it is not, however, the meaning of a Mantra that is important, but its Nada or sound, which is retained, though in a less effective form, by the letters when written down.

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particularly efficacious in bestowing or acquiring knowledge, as Sarasvati is the goddess of learning and her Bija is "Aing". If, in place of "Aing", the Bija "Hring" is used, the Mantra can be recited for obtaining or granting Siddhis or occult powers, as Maya, wife of Shiva, is the goddess of Siddhis and her Bija is "Hring". Similarly, the Mantra "Shring, Sach Chit Ekam Brahmam" bestows prosperity, "Shring" being the Bija of Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity.

Further, "this Mula Mantra may be recited as a whole with or without the Pranava, or it may be broken up into as many parts as there are words in it. Each again of these words may be used with the Pranava or any two of them, and so on."* The Brahma Mantra, according to Tantric rules, can have eighty-four variations made possible by such permutations.

Mula Mantras containing more words obviously permit of the formation of a greater number of subsidiary Mantras, and from the seventy million Mula Mantras can be formed innumerable secondary Mantras to suit different occasions and purposes. While a good many Mantras, such as the Gayatri, are of the nature of prayers intended for one's spiritual uplift, the great body of Tantric Mantras are of a magical nature used for gaining mastery over others or over the powers of Nature. These magical Mantras are grouped into six classes, namely, 1) Marana (to kill), 2) Mohana (to delude), 3) Sthambhana (to immobilise), 4) Akarshana (to lure), 5) Vasikarana (to enthrall), and 6) Ucchatana (to cause injury short of death).

These different classes of Mantras cannot be interchanged. For example, a Mantra intended to kill an enemy will not only be ineffective if used to lure him, but may do positive harm to the Mantrin. In all Marana and Ucchatana Mantras, the deity invoked is usually some violent form of Shiva or a blood-thirsty manifestation of his spouse, the never-failing source of terror in Mantra Sastra. The monkey-god Hanuman, the man-bird Garuda, Yama, god of death, ferocious incarnations of Vishnu like the Boar and Narasimha, in fact, any terror-inspiring deity can also be invoked in rites intended to harm, dement or destroy enemies.

For a Mantra to be effective, it is not enough if the Mantrin merely repeats the text; in Marana and Ucchatana particularly, he should charge his body and soul with the powers of destruction in the universe. This is done by the rite known as Nyasa which consists in mentally assigning the various parts of the body to the deities, and "seating" them in appropriate places. Again, the deity invoked should be contemplated in his or her proper form and the Mantrin himself should establish a close link with the deity invoked by impersonation. The idea is similar to the technique of the devil-dancer though the Mantrin's method is more refined.

An illustration will make the point clear. The Mahamari Mantra or the incantation of the goddess of pestilence is often used by Mantrins to destroy enemies; the Mantra reads as under:

"Hring! Kill, kill (here mention the person's name), O thou goddess of pestilence and famines, possessing red-hot eyes and a complexion dark as the sable night. Kill, kill, O goddess, sister of the god of death who consigns all creatures to the graveyard. Aum! Burn! Aum! Boil. Aum! Cut and clear! Aum! Destroy. Let ruin and confusion seize my enemy. Hum! Phut! I make obeisance to the goddess who is dreaded by all sentient beings and who grants all boons to her devotees."

For making this Mantra effective, the rite of Nyasa is to be performed by repeating the following text:

* *Mahanirvana Tantra*, translation, Arthur Avalon.

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"Aum! Obeisance to the goddess Mari, located in my heart. Aum, Svaha! Salutation to the goddess Maha Mari psychically invoked in my head. Aum! Obeisance to Kalaratri (the presiding deity of the universe during its cataclysmic dissolution) situated in the tuft of hair in my crown. Aum! Khas! Hum! Obeisance to the sable coloured goddess who is my armour. Aum! Obeisance to the star-eyed goddess possessing lightning for her tongues, and dreaded by all creatures."*

While repeating this Mantra, the Mantrin should psychically project it to the region of the eyes, both occult and physical.

The deity of the Mantra, at the same time, should be contemplated as "possessing twenty-eight hands, wielding in them a sword, a Khetaka, a club, a mace, a bow, an arrow, a clenched fist, a conch-shell, a Khadga, a banner, a thunderbolt, a quoit, a Mushala, a battle-axe, a hand-drum, a mirror, a spear, a tuft of hair, a ploughshare, a noose, a Tomara, a drum, a Panara, a dagger, a trident, and a skull, with one of the remaining arms in the attitude of bestowing a blessing, and the other showing a clenched fist. She should be contemplated as Mahishamardini or in the attitude of slaying the buffalo demon."

It is not enough to repeat the text of a Mantra in the proper way, but the posture assumed for repeating it is also important. Some Mantras should be repeated in the Puraka posture (in which the thumb is placed on the right nostril with the fingers raised, breathing being done only through the left nostril), others in Kumbhaka (in which both nostrils are closed and breathing suspended), while yet others in various other Yogic postures. In fact Mantra Sastra is closely allied to Yoga, and an adept in Mantra is usually an adept in Yoga too.

There are certain general instructions to be followed in the use of Mantras. First and foremost, no one should use a Mantra without knowing the Devata or deity to whom it belongs, the seer to whom it was revealed and the metre in which it is composed. The term Namaskar (obeisance) should be used in all charms practised with a view to confer peace or prosperity on an individual. "Vasat" is of particular efficacy in incantations meant to restore good health to the ailing. In Mantras intended to injure or dement an enemy, or to create dissension among friends or couples, what is known as the Astra Bija or Weapon Bija "Phut!" is important. Incantations repeated to kill an enemy should be closed with an invocation to the god of death, Yama, such as this: "Thou art, O Yama, the god of death holding universal sway over the regions of the departed. This ceaseless, infinite Time is thy embodiment, and thou dealest with the departed according to their deserts. I offer my enemy (here mention his name) to thee, as a victim. Kill him without delay."

Just as a knowledge of the correct nature of spirits and demons is essential for a sorcerer, it is important for a Mantrin to know what Mantra is to be repeated on what occasion and what deity to be invoked. Above all, a Mantra should be repeated with the correct accent and emphasis in the proper place and an indifferent repetition might derange a rite and have an effect directly opposed to what was aimed at. Hence Mantrins take particular care to study each syllable and word in a Mantra and master the correct intonations and methods of recitation. In fact, as a preliminary to the study of Mantra Sastra the novice has to spend years in mastering the rules of grammar and syntax, and these are on this account deemed sacred literature by the Hindus.

* *Agni Purana.*

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In spite of all precautions taken, the essential imperfection of human nature may lead to faults and a careful Mantrin takes the trouble of performing before or after the ceremony proper a minor rite for expiating the sins of commission and omission that might have mitigated the effect of the main ritual.

In Mantra Sastra the written word is almost as powerful as the spoken word. In the preparation of protective amulets known as Kavachas, lockets, charms, etc., worn to ward off evil influences, the usual procedure is to write down, on metal discs, parchment, paper, birch leaf, etc., Mantras in appropriate material such as human or animal blood, saffron, Gorochanam or the juice of herbs possessing magical properties and enclose them in metal cases of sizes that can be worn on the wrist, arms, neck or at the waist.

YANTRA

The term Yantra, in general use, means a mechanical device designed to easily achieve a desired end. In Mantra Sastra a Yantra means a cabalistic diagram in which to install by magic superhuman beings in order to bring about a desired effect.

Just as each deity has a particular Mantra, he or she has a Yantra. In fact, the Yantra, the Mantra and the deity are considered inseparable. The Mantra is said to be the soul, and the Yantra, the body of the deity.

Yantras proper are those diagrams in which triangular figures predominate while those in which the figures shaped like lotus-petals are more numerous are called Chakras. This division is not very rigid and the terms are at times indiscriminately used to denote all cabalistic diagrams; while Yantras and Chakras denote particular deities, a Mandala is any figure of convenient dimensions with angles, circles and lotus-petals, which can be used for all magical purposes requiring the installation of spirits and deities whose Yantras are not known, or when numerous deities have to be installed in one diagram with no leading place given to one.

Tantric texts give detailed instructions as to how to draw Yantras. The Yantra known as Yantra Raja is to be drawn as follows:

"An equilateral triangle with its apex pointing downwards should be drawn first and the Maya Bija 'Hring' written in it. Around the triangle two concentric circles are to be drawn, one outside the other. In the space between the circumferences of the circles, draw sixteen filaments of equal dimensions, and outside it eight lotus-petals. The Yantra so drawn should be enclosed in a Bhupura, or base with straight lines with four entrances. While drawing the Yantra, the Mantrin should continuously repeat the Mula Mantra, 'Aum! Paramesvari Svaha!' "

The most celebrated Yantra in Mantra Sastra is the Sri Yantra or Sri Chakra of Devi or Tripurasundari (the resplendent beauty), the supreme deity of the Mantrins, identical with Sakti or Prime Power. According to Tantric texts, this Yantra represents cosmic dynamics. The *Yogini Hridaya* says that "when the supreme Sakti of her own will assumes the form of the universe and sees her own becoming, then the Sri Chakra comes into being." The *Kama Kala Vilasa* explains in detail how the Bindu or central point in the Yantra, by its own Kama or desire splits itself into two and gives rise to the phenomenal world and its bewildering multiplicity. Not only Mantrins and Tantrics but other orthodox schools of Hinduism also recognise the importance of Sri Yantra, and the philosopher Sankara is said to have installed a Sri Yantra in every temple he founded.

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The material in and with which a Yantra or Mandala is drawn is very important in sorcery. A gold needle with diamond tip is used by those who can afford it to write on metallic substances, while the poor may use the thorn of the Bail tree and parchment or leaf. The general effect of the Yantra can be enhanced if the needle or thorn is dipped in Kula Pushpa or flower.*

After drawing the Yantra, the deity or spirit has to be installed in it. The formula and ritual employed for this are similar to those used for installing an idol. The Mantrin first meditates upon the deity and then rouses him or her in his own person. The divine presence thus roused is next communicated to the Yantra by appropriate Japa (repetition of incantations). When the deity has thus been installed into the Yantra, "the vital airs (Prana) of the deity are infused therein by the Prana-Pratishta ceremony, Mantra and Mudra. The Yantra now is no more the mere gross matter veiling the spirit which has always been there, but instinct with its aroused presence, which the Mantrin first welcomes and then worships."†

Yantras are widely used in Kavachas and lockets. In fact, Mantras intended for Kavachas and lockets are always inscribed in Yantras, and the wearer is more or less considered a walking deity, of whom malignant spirits live in fear.

MUDRAS

The Hindus have evolved an elaborate language of gestures which is widely used in their classical dances. In pantomimes, articulate speech is forbidden on the stage, and ideas are conveyed, stories told, and the Navarasas (the nine cardinal emotions) depicted by means of the gestures of the hand and the expression of the face. The whole art is so well developed that two deaf adepts can make each other understood by means of gestures.

While Mudras generally mean all gestures of the hand, in Mantra Sastra, the term is used to indicate those gestures in which the intertwining of the fingers is believed to produce magical effects. The human palm is universally believed to possess magical powers, and all jugglers, as those who have seen stage performances by these know, wave the palm or a wand to convert an object into something else. In the Tantric cults, each finger has a definite magical function; the index finger, for instance, is generally used to denote threat, to drive away, etc., and on this account it is known in Mantra Sastra as the "threatening finger."

Mudras, though innumerable like Mantras and Yantras, do not pertain to particular deities, and as such can be used on practically all occasions irrespective of the deities or spirits invoked. There are 108 main Mudras of which only 55 are in general use.

At times, a Mudra is used as a Yantra in order to lure and temporarily install a deity. For instance, the *Matsya Mudra* (fish Mudra) is shown in offering Arghya (water to the deity in ritual worship) by placing the right hand on the back of the left and extending, on either side, the thumbs like fins in order to mentally convert the pot containing water into the ocean teeming with fish, and install the sea-god

* Kula flower is the Tantric name for the cataminal blood of women. When a girl attains puberty, she is said to have "borne the flower." Kula flowers are broadly divided into three: Swayambhu, Kunda and Gola. "Swayambhu is the Kula Pushpa of any woman; Kunda, of a girl born of a married woman other than her husband; and Gola of that of a daughter of a widow." In accordance with the general conception that the objectionable has greater potency in magic than the conventional, Kunda and Gola are considered more effective than Swayambhu.

† Arthur Avalon, *Principles of Tantra.*

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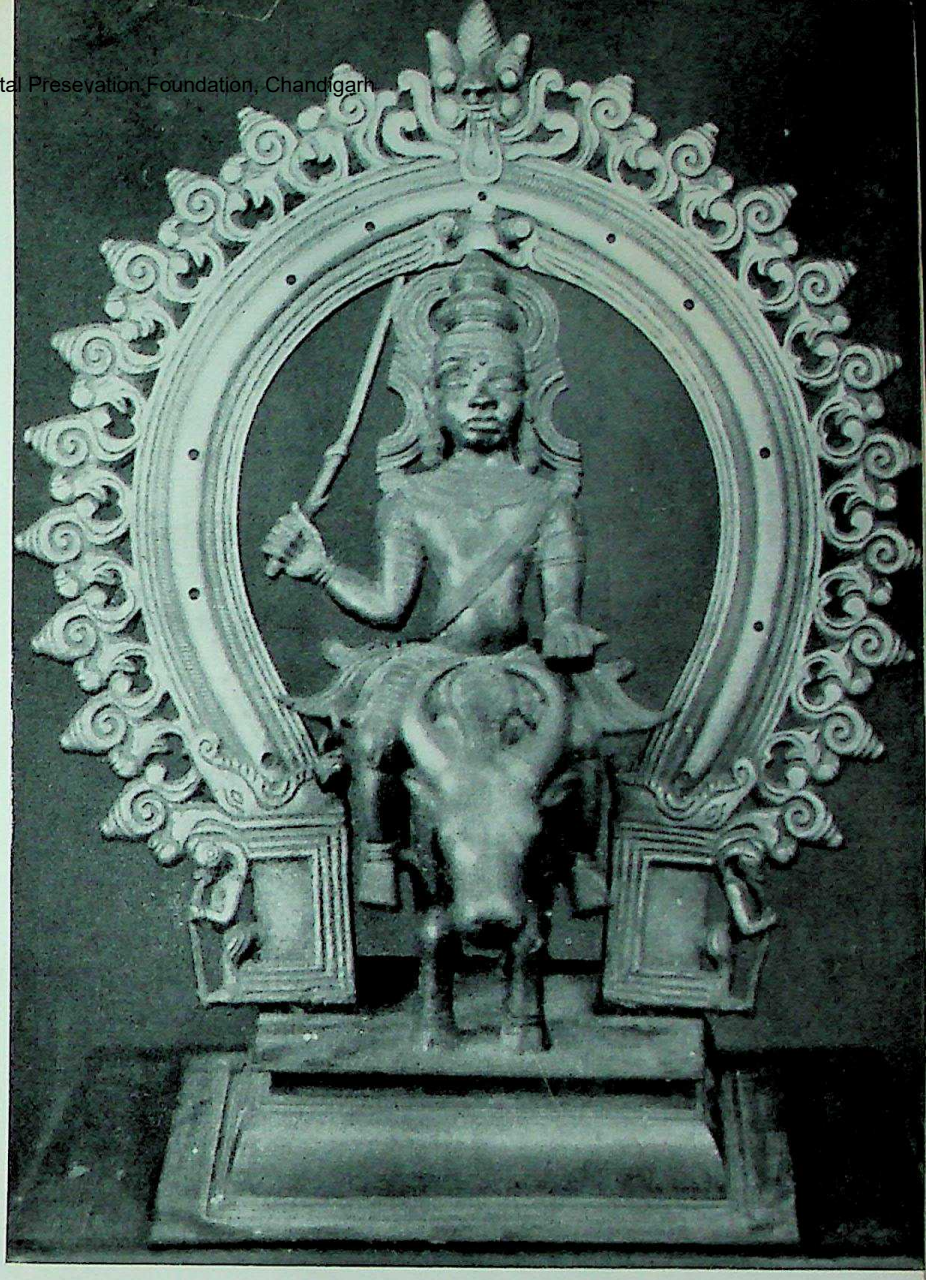
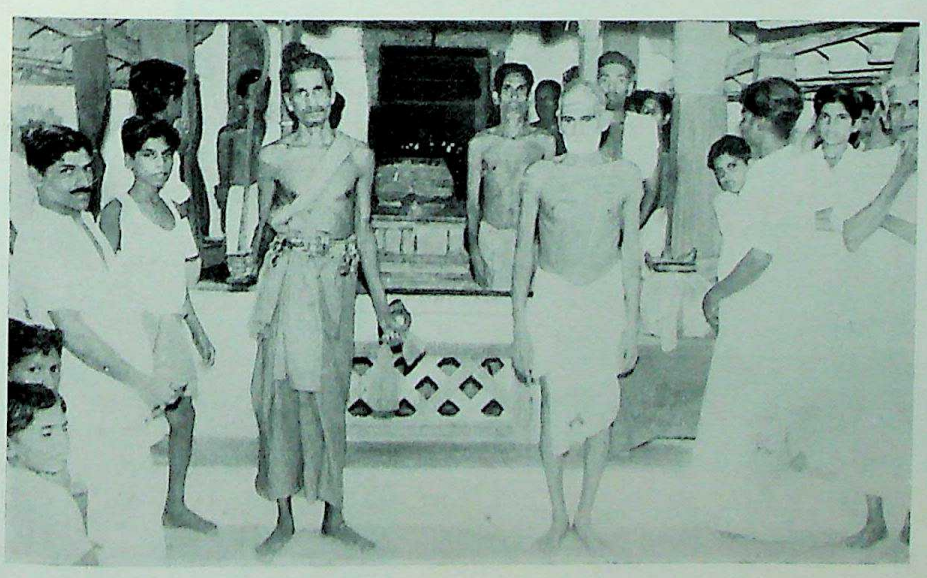


41. KUTTICHATHAN
A favourite familiar of Kerala sorcerers



42. A TEMPLE ORACLE AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE TEMPLE WITH HIS OFFICIAL KHADGA OR CURVED SWORD
(*Photo*: M. P. Poulos)

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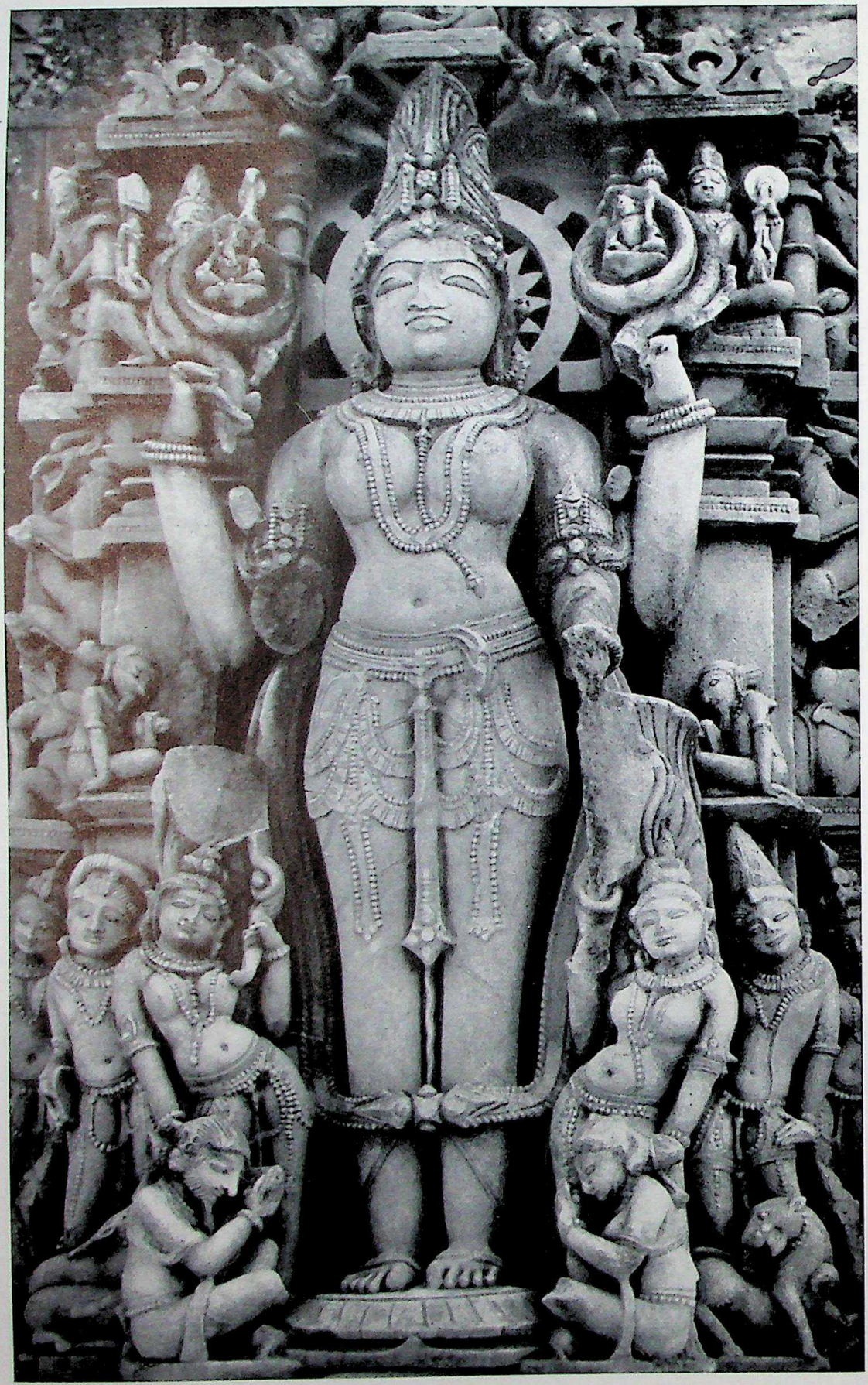

43. PARVATI, WIFE OF SHIVA
(*From* Khajuraho. *Photo*: Dharshan Lall)

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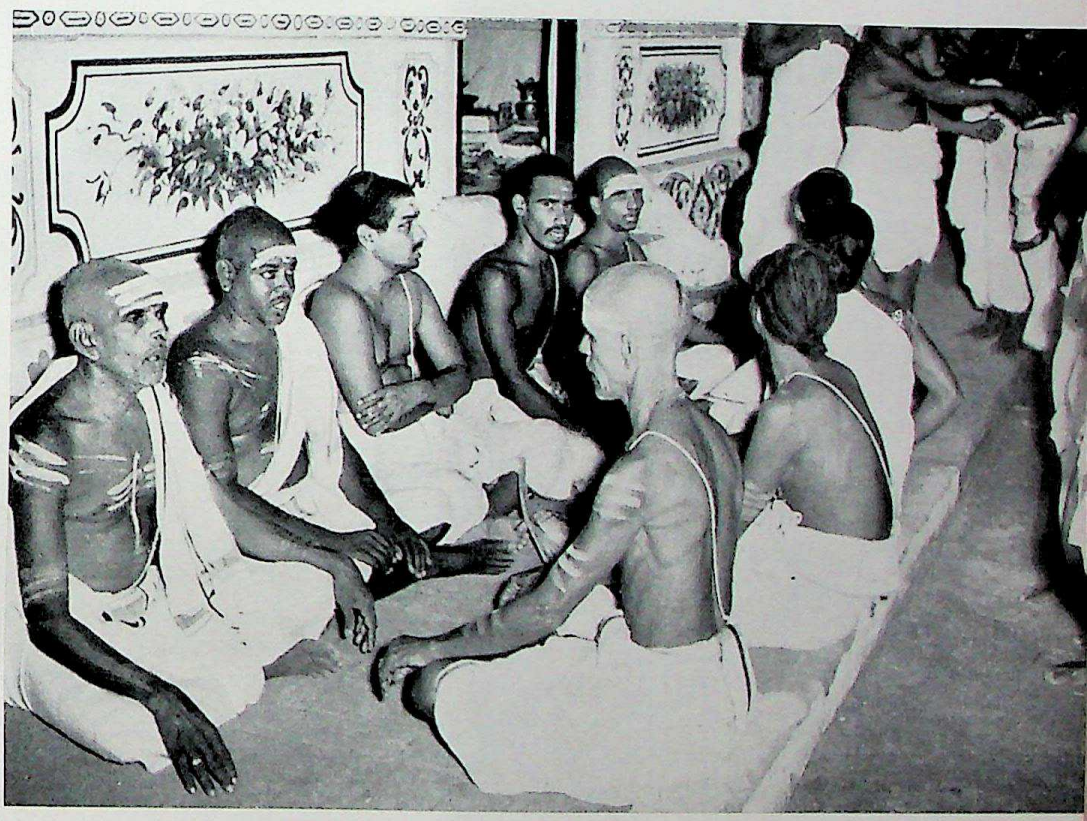

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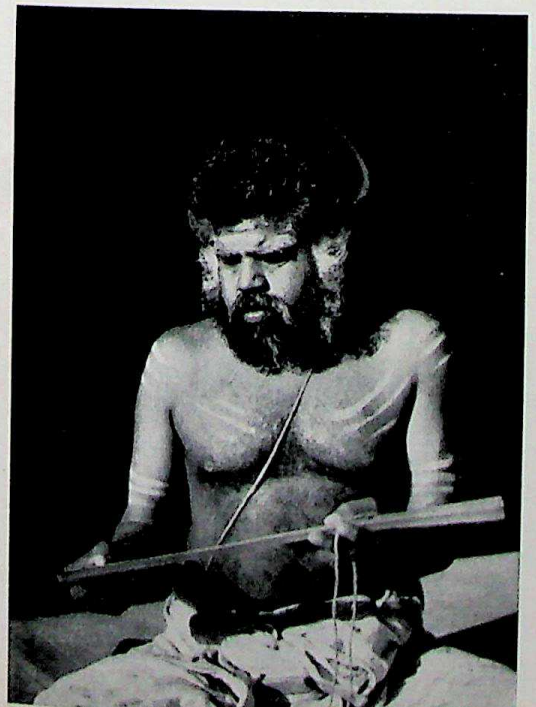

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44. THE MYSTIC MONOSYLLABLE 'AUM' REPRESENTING THE HINDU TRINITY

45. BRAHMINS RECITING MANTRAS
(*Photo*: N. Ramakrishna)

46. READING OF SACRED TEXTS FROM PALM LEAF WRITINGS
(*Photo*: N. Ramakrishna)

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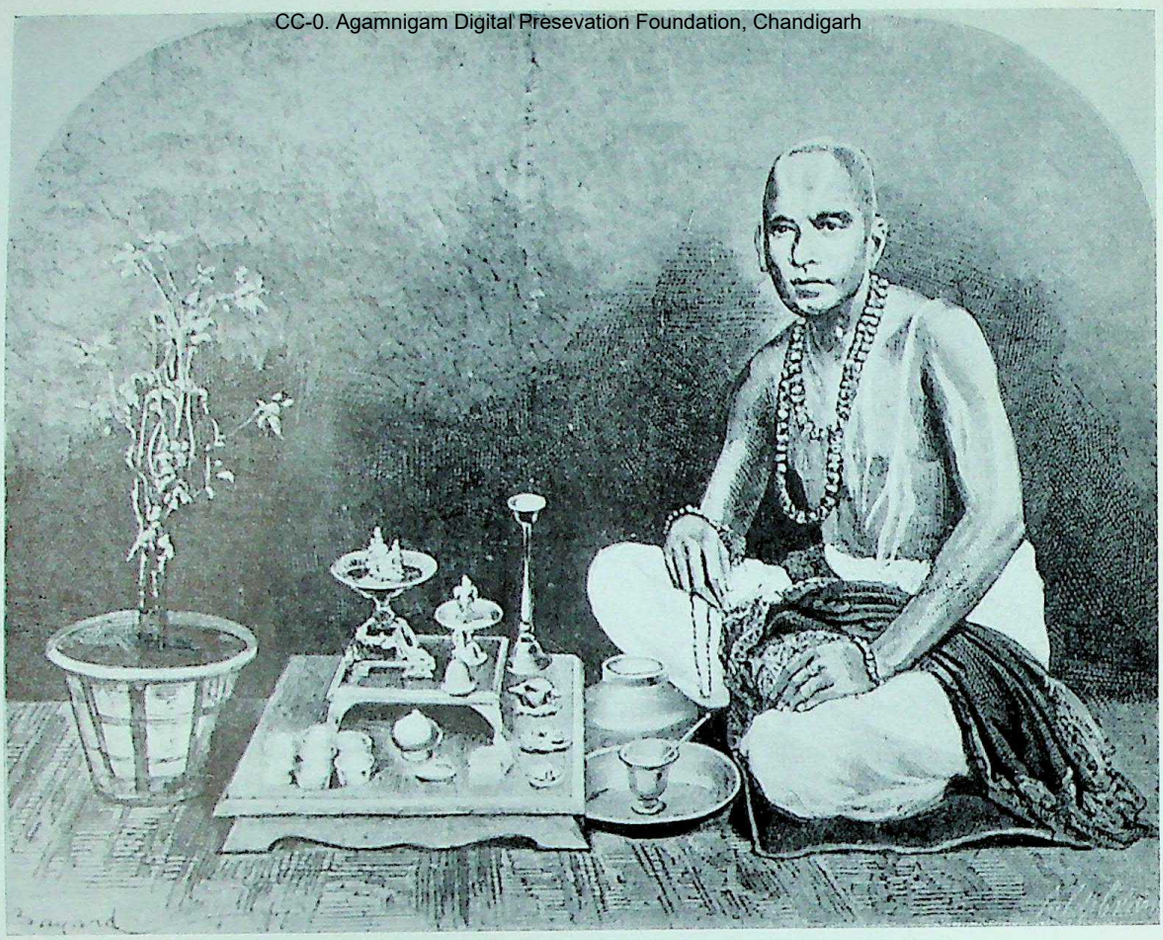

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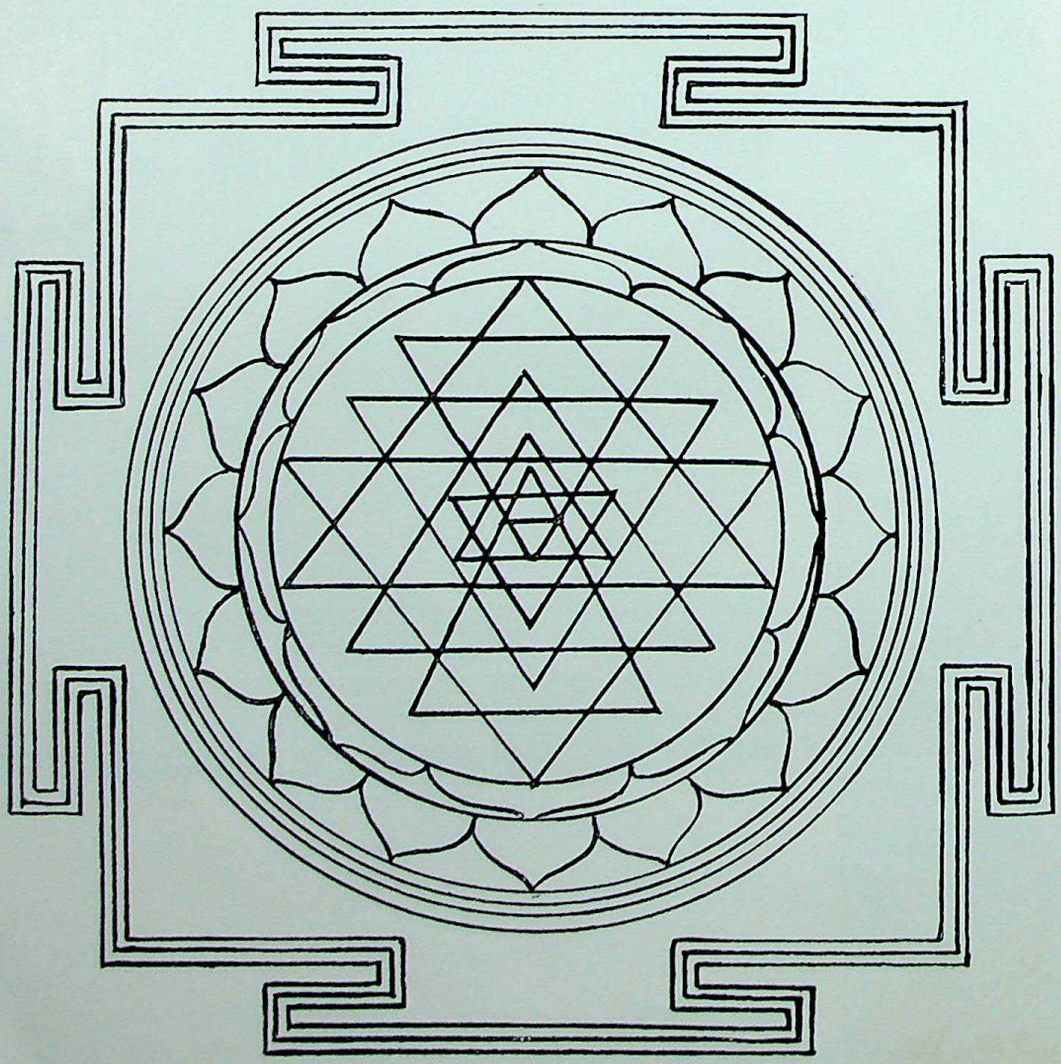
47. BRAHMIN PREPARED FOR PRAYERS (*From* Urwick's *Indian Pictures*).

48. THE CELEBRATED SRI YANTRA OR MYSTIC DIAGRAM OF DEVI (SAKTI) REPRESENTING COSMIC DYNAMICS



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Varuna; similarly, the *Yoni Mudra* (symbolising the genitals of a woman), a triangle formed by the thumbs and the first fingers, is shown to invoke Devi and install her for worship, the Yoni being "the Pitha (seat) or Yantra" of the goddess.

Before showing a Mudra, the Mantrin charges his hands with Mantras and the essences of deities by the rite known as Kara Nyasa (Nyasa of the hand). The Mantra usually repeated for consecrating the hand runs as follows:

"Hrang! Angushtabhyang Namah! (Salutation to the thumb). Hring! Sat Tanjanibhyang Svaha! (Auspicious be the index finger). Hrung! Chit, Madhyamabhyang Vashat! (May the middle finger be endowed with intelligence). Hraing! Ekam Anamikabhyang (nameless or ring finger) Hum! Hraung Brahmam Kanishthabhyang Vaushat (little finger)."

After thus consecrating the thumb and the fingers the palm and the back of the hand are charged with the following Mantra:

"Hrah! Karatala Prishthabhyang Phut."*

Some of the well known and most commonly used Mudras are: *Matsya Mudra* (already noticed), *Dhenu Mudra* (cow Mudra, representing the udder of the cow, a symbol of prosperity), *Avahini Mudra* (for welcoming or invoking a deity or spirit), *Sthapini Mudra* (for seating), *Sannirodhini Mudra* (for detaining), *Sammukhiharani* (for confronting) and *Avagunthana Mudra* (the veil Mudra in which the palm covers the consecrated object).

MAGICAL DRUGS

There is a voluminous literature found scattered in the several religious and secular works of India on the magic properties of herbs and certain concoctions which are extensively used in sorcery.

A peculiarity of the ingredients used in the preparation of magic balms and concoctions is that most of them are loathsome and objectionable, and can be obtained only through crime. The live heart and liver of humans and animals, embryos extracted from living women, etc., are considered to be of peculiar magical potency, the effect varying according to age, sex and caste. An embryo of an outcaste is considered more potent than that of a woman of the four regular castes. As a matter of fact, in sorcery of the Marana type, the morally depraved and the criminally inclined provide better material than the conventionally correct.

Of the less objectionable articles used, mention may be made of slough of snakes, skin and tail of scorpions, hair of monkeys, eyeballs of night-birds, claws of tigers and kites, foecal matter of various animals, birds and humans, charred bodies from the cremation ground, and many poisonous herbs. (For certain other articles, see next chapter.)

For obvious reasons, the scientific efficacy of most of the concoctions used by sorcerers cannot be tested, unless of course, the research worker is prepared to go to jail for his objective interest in the black arts!

The idea of magic properties of herbs, etc., is closely associated with alchemy, and the attempts of medieval pseudo-scientists to transmute base metals into gold. In China, the Taoist priests experimented for ages with herbs and drugs to prepare the Elixir of Immortality, the drinking of which sent many an emperor to a premature grave and demented others. In India, this branch of magic was not so thoroughly studied as in China, the interest of the Brahmins being mainly

* *Mahanirvana Tantra.*

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centred round developing the magical effects of Mantras and Yantras.

The medicinal properties of herbs, and the flesh, urine, excreta, etc., of various kinds of animals, birds and reptiles were studied by physicians who founded the indigenous system of medicine known as Ayurveda; this is, however, a scientific system of medicine widely practised in India and successfully competes, at present, with the Allopathic system.

Apart from their magical properties, some of the drugs and potions used by sorcerers, especially in Marana, have poisonous effects which cause disease, dementia or death. It is a usual practice for sorcerers in certain parts of India to make effigies of victims, wrap them in rags dipped in magic potions, to collect these in earthen pots and throw the pots into the house or compound of the victim, and this possibly fouls the air he breathes, causing disease.

DIRECT ACTION

In sorcery of the primitive type, loud and noisy rites, and weird, violent dances play an important role; in lycanthropy, as we have already seen, the sorcerer himself takes direct action to injure or kill his victim. In Indo-Aryan sorcery the emphasis, however, is on complete secrecy, and the Mantrin tries to achieve his end from a distance by means of spells and by invoking spirits or deities who are commissioned to do his biddings unknown to any one. It is rarely that an Indo-Aryan Mantrin goes out of his house to cause injury or death to his victims.

In certain cases, however, the man who commissions the Mantrin is made to do some offices for him. In Vasikarana type of sorcery, for instance, when a man or a woman has to be brought under subjection, the general practice is to introduce into some fruit or sweetmeat, by means of charmed needles, some magical paste properly inspired with Vasikarana Mantras; this fruit or sweet is then handed over to the party who engages the sorcerer, and it is his business to see that the victim is made to eat it. At times we hear stories of how a careless accomplice left the charm unguarded, and how some innocent person eating it fell violently in love with the wrong woman.

In certain forms of sorcery, it is necessary to keep Yantras or other mysterious objects charged with Mantras and malignant spirits under the bed of the victim or bury them at the doorway or in a place frequented by him. When it is merely intended to make the evil spirit haunt his house, it is enough if the magical kit is thrown into the compound. As a rule the Mantrin does not undertake this work but his client is asked to do it; when well paid, however, some Mantrins employ their own accomplices in order to avoid suspicion about their clients' role in the affair.

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4. *Some Formulae and Practical Methods of Sorcery*

(The following passages are meant to give the reader a rough idea of how sorcery was, and is, practised in India. A good deal of the information given here is based on what the author was able to collect from practising sorcerers whose names he is not empowered to divulge. Where the passages have the support of published texts, these have been mentioned. For obvious reasons, loathsome practices and rites intended to injure, dement or kill innocent victims are not mentioned).

LOVE CHARMS AND REJUVENATION

If a man performs Homa (fire-rite) with Jati flowers, he is expected to win the girl he loves, but a Homa performed with twigs of Shakhoda, Vata or Aparamarga may lead to revulsion.

* * *

"If a man repeats the 'Hring'-kar Mantra with a Visarga appended, one hundred and one times every morning, by psychically projecting it to the centre of the forehead of the woman he loves, he can bring her under his control."—*Garuda Purana.*

* * *

A Tilaka (caste-mark) composed of ox-gall treated with her cataminal blood, put on her forehead by a woman, in the manner of a Bhabana, is said to enable her to fascinate any man at first sight.

* * *

"He who in a pure and tranquil state of mind, pours out ten thousand libations of clarified butter in a Homa (fire-rite), repeating at the same time, the 'Hring'-kar Mantra, with his mind steadily fixed on the object of his desire, will make the girl he loves fall in love with him at first sight."—*Garuda Purana.*

* * *

If a man desiring to wed a particular woman, buries under the threshold of her room, an iron spike of ten fingers' length, charmed with the Mantra "Visvakarmanam Havisha," that woman, it is said, will be unable to marry any one else.

* * *

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If a betel-leaf over which the Mantra "Aum! Kalakevaye! Kukutaye! Svaha!" is repeated one thousand and one times is given to a woman, that woman, it is said, will fall in love with the man so giving it.

* * *

If a man takes the ashes of wild jasmine and mixes it with camphor and Kasturi in a silk handkerchief, keeps the mixture in a secret place for five days, then burns it with the ghee of a black cow, the calf of which is also black, and smears his palm with the ashes and shows it to a woman, she is expected to follow him.

* * *

If a woman wears a piece of glycerhiza, three fingers in length, in her waist for seven and a half Nalikas (about two and half Nalikas make an hour), and then makes a paste of it in cows's milk, dries it in the shadow of a jasmine bower and administers it in anything edible to a man, he is believed to come under her power.

* * *

On the asterism of Asvati in the bright half of the moon, if a man takes eleven leaves of the Neem tree, removes the veins from the leaves and puts each leaf in the juice of a coconut, repeating his own name and that of the woman he loves, and then dries and powders the leaves and uses the powder as snuff in the presence of the woman, she is said to come under his power.

* * *

If a man mixes vermilion, castor-seed and iron-dust of equal weight, ties the mixture in a silk kerchief and burns it, and then collects the ashes in a tortoise-shell and smears his left palm with the ashes and shows it to a woman, she is said to fall in love with him.

* * *

If a man seeking the love of a woman who is indifferent to him, recites into her ears while she is asleep, the Mantra of the *Sama Veda* "Parapriya! Hi Vah Karih!" he is expected to win her love.

* * *

A Tilaka, with a paste of Aparita, Bhringaraja, Vacha and Sahadeva herbs mixed in equal quantity and charmed with Mantras, put on the forehead of a man is said to enable him to charm a woman at first sight.

* * *

"By regularly taking a compound of Asvagandha, Nagavala, Masha pulse and treacle, an old man can become young."—*Garuda Purana.*

TO WIN BATTLES AND DESTROY INVADING ARMIES

(Hindu kings had regular Mantrins in their pay whose duty was to aid the king by magical rites in the destruction of his enemies. A good part of Tantric and Puranic literature deals with the mysterious art of destroying invading armies by means of Mantras and weird rituals. The *Artha Sastra*, a work on the science of

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politics written by Kautilya or Chanakya in the third century B.C., has a chapter on the destruction of enemy kings and rebellious chiefs by secret sciences).

"Make the life-size image of an elephant with clay obtained from ant-hills. The figure should be installed on the summit of a barren hill in a field lying fallow and having but one tree, or in a desolate place blighted by lightning.

"At midnight, perform a Homa at the left side of the animal effigy between the legs, repeating the following Mantra, invoking the aid of deities: 'Aum! Obeisance to the great Bhairava (a terror-inspiring form of Shiva)! Fierce-jawed yellow-eyed, fearsome in appearance, holding the sword and trident in thy hands! Aum! Obeisance to the goddess Kaumari! O thou Ghanta Devi! Kill! Kill on a sudden (here mention the name of the enemy king). I make obeisance to thee O goddess of supernatural strength whose hairs bristle with all-consuming rage! Tongues of fire shoot out of thy mouth and thy fierce jaws are furnished with rows of horrid teeth. Come, O Fierce One! Thou dealest the hardest blows in war.... O thou, strong, victorious Hanuman who hast bridged the limitless ocean and laid low the terrible demon Ravana; thou who didst carry the mountain Gandhamadana in thy hands! Enfold within thy endless tail my enemy (here again give the name of the enemy king)....O Rudra, ranger of the skies, manifest thy inconceivable might. Pierce, pierce, trample, trample my enemy and his forces!"

"This rite will cause confusion in the ranks of the enemy and cause injury to the enemy king."—*Agni Purana.*

* * *

"When the figure of the enemy, carved out of Rajavriksha (*Cassia fistula*), is besmeared with the bile of a brown cow killed with weapons on the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month, it causes blindness to the enemy."—*Artha Sastra.*

* * *

"At the time of the commencement of action, or on the eve of a battle, if the king's Mantrin resorts to a cremation ground and lights fire with logs of wood found there and performs a Homa ceremony with oblations of poison, human blood and charred human bones, 108 times constantly repeating the Mantra 'destruction to my enemy,' giving his name, it will bring victory, in battle, to the king."—*Agni Purana.*

* * *

"The Mantra 'Aum! Obeisance to the goddess Chandi! Aum! Hum! Phut!' repeated over a sword makes it irresistible in action."—*Garuda Purana.*

* * *

The following Mantra, known as Sangram Vijaya Vidya (victory-winning-art) is said to be particularly efficacious in destroying invading armies:

"Aum! Hrim! Thou goddess Chamunda who dwellest in the cremation ground of the universe, wieldest a Khatanga and a human skull in thy hands and standest on the body of primordial matter of universal dissolution, represented by god Mahesvara, surrounded by attenuating ether pervading the dying space in a disintegrating universe! Obstruct the chasms of the yawning worlds with thy endless prowess. Obstruct! Oh! Thou, symbol of Primal Night, who art sur-

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rounded by mighty Ganas! Manifest thy all-consuming powers! O Thou, goddess with a gaping mouth, bedecked with jingling bells, whose laughter shakes the globes in their orbits. Aum! Hrum! Phut!

"Advance! Advance, O goddess with jagged teeth, the lustre of which pierces the gloom of Primal Night! Advance! Advance, O goddess of a haggard and emaciated frame, whose footsteps are followed by a concourse of unearthly beings! Advance, advance, again advance, thou, the Supreme, the terrible destroyer of all monsters, thyself the monstress of monsters! Advance, with thy curved teeth exposed in diabolic laughter, thy bloody tongue sticking out of thy blood-smeared mouth dripping the fresh blood of the victims thou hast devoured!

"Aum! Chili! Chili! O thou goddess with blood-shot eyes flashing fire, agile as the bird Chakora. Quick! Obstruct the voids in the universes with thy cosmic might!

"O thou goddess whose sullen look inspires terror in the breasts of all creation, whose roar sends a tremor through the worlds. Make the welkin resound with thy weird laughter in one unbroken echo.

"Aum! Hrum! Accomplish this object of mine (here mention the particular object) O goddess, whose mouth vomits primal darkness through the interseces of thy horrid teeth and who protects against all the evils that beset our mundane existence. Aum! Destroy with thy invincible mace, all the forces of my enemy. Cut, cut through their ranks, O mighty goddess!

"Aum! Dance, and sport in death! Shatter, shatter my enemies!

"Kill! Kill, O goddess who does relish human flesh and blood! Stamp, stamp them! Aum! Pierce, pierce them! Aum! Slay, slay! Chase, pursue them! Aum! Strike them to the ground, those my enemies, O goddess who lives a charmed life and has a frame hard as the thunderbolt. Aum! Stupefy! Cut, cut down to pieces, once for all, those evil doers, whether captured or free. Dance, dance the dance of death, O thou goddess with eyes sunk in their sockets, face fearsome as that of the owl, and head rendered ghastly by the hairs standing on end like quills. Burn, burn my enemy's forces, O thou goddess wearing a garland of skulls and holding a skull in thy hand! Aum! Cut and mince the armed hosts sent against me! Enter my enemy's ranks arrayed in battle! Aum! Why dost thou tarry, O goddess? Aum! Assail my enemies with the might of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, and with the essence of all sainted souls!

"Aum! Stay, stay the progress of those marching hosts. Break, break their arms and ranks, O thou goddess with black serpents coiled round thy body! Break, break their forces, thou, who dost confound all order of troops whether drawn up in circles or squares. Make all their manoeuvres ineffective. O thou goddess, from whose nostrils dangle dreaded serpents reaching down to thy protruded lips rendered doubly dreadful by the blood-smeared mouth, hardly hid by thy dark, dishevelled hair falling on to your face in wild disorder. Yell! Yell, O goddess whose mouth vomits fatal fire. Trample, turn upside down the ground my enemies stand on.

"Aum! Cut! Pierce with thy trident! Kill with thy thunderbolt! Strike with thy club! Cleave with thy quoit! Wound with thy spear! Strike with thy Karnika! Attack with thy mace!

"Come, O goddess, who ranges the skies! Cast thy noose, pierce with thy spear and stop my enemies! Enter their battle ranks, paralyse their senses! Charm the cardinal points and the spaces above and below the terrestrial plane.

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"Aum! Help me to keep my head cool amidst dangers. Help my hand and feet to perform their functions with vigour. Let my eyes be wide open, let all my organs perform their normal functions in health and vigour. Set at nought the influences of baneful planets and malignant spirits sent against me by my enemies.

"O thou, wife of Brahma, revealed also as wives of Kumara and Mahesvara! Come Vaishnavi, come Bhairavi! Salutation to thee, O Chamundi! O Revati, who dwells on Kailas, on the summit of the Himalayas!

"O Strike my enemies! Strike them! Aum! Obeisance to Chamunda! Kili! Kili! Vichale! Hum! Phut!"—*Agni Purana.*

* * *

"A Homa ceremony performed before a painting of Kali in her destructive attitude to the accompaniment of the continuous chanting of Mahamari Mantra (the Mantra of epidemics) with oblations of leaves and twigs of the Neem tree dipped in goat's blood, will destroy the enemy root and branch. The ceremony performed continuously for seven days in front of a hostile army will create panic in the ranks due to the outbreak of epidemics.

"By performing the ceremony with a hundred and eight sticks of any sacrificial tree, the votary would be able to destroy his enemy, even if he is protected by god Brahma himself."—*Agni Purana.*

* * *

"When a man, who has kept his eyes secure with the application of ointments and medicinal water, burns, on the occasion of the commencement of a battle or the assailing of a fort, the roots of Kali (*Tragia involucrata*), Kushtha (*Costus*), Nada (a kind of reed) and Satavari (*Asperagus racemosus*) or the powder of (the skin of) a snake, the tail of a peacock, Krkana (a kind of partridge) and Pancha kushta (?) together with wet or dry chaff, the smoke caused thereby destroys the eyes of all animals."—*Artha Sastra.*

* * *

The Trailokya Vijaya (conqueror of three worlds) Mantra is said to be of particular efficacy in counteracting the influence of any magic that might have been used by an enemy king. The Mantra is:

"Aum! Hum! Kshoun! Hrum! Aum, obeisance to the terrible goddess with the horrid jaws. Let thy dreaded laughter reverberate through space! Shriek and yell, O goddess of infernal sound! Be manifest, thou of emaciated body! Put on thy mantle, O goddess clad in the coils of the serpent known as Gonasha. Yawn! Open thy abysmal mouth, O goddess, clad in raw hides! Drive everything before thee, O goddess adorned with a garland of human skulls! Dance, dance with thy sword flashing forth lightning, thy fearsome face made fiercer by sullen looks and thy eye-brows arched in rage! Roar, roar, O thou besmeared with the fetid fat of corpses thou feedst on. Wax furious, O goddess, and shine forth in resplendent rage, O goddess shrouded in dark clouds. Bewilder the minds of men, O goddess, who rides a lion! Hun! Hring! Kling! Aum! Hrum! Hum! Aum! Ham! Hrim! Hrun! Aum, make them tremble with fear! Aum! Ha! Hus! Khas! O thou wielder of the thunderbolt! Hum! Kshum! Ksham! O thou who art manifest as rage itself! Burn, O horror of horrors! Break the ranks of my enemy, cut them through! Aum! O fierce-jawed mistress of all ill-shaped ghosts

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and goblins, O destroyer of evil, I salute thee! O thou, who art ever-victorious, irresistible, invincible in the three worlds! Hrim! Phut!"—*Agni Purana.*

While repeating the above Mantra, the goddess should be contemplated as possessing a blue complexion, twenty arms, and as standing on the dead bodies of men. The rite of Nyasa should be performed over the five different parts of the body, and oblations of clarified butter and red flowers should be offered in consecrated fire.

PREVENTION AND CURE OF SNAKE-BITES

(The cure of snake-bite, in many parts of India, is even now connected with Mantra Sastra. The Lord of Mantras meant for the prevention and cure of snake-bite is Garuda, man-eagle, the vehicle of Vishnu. Garuda is believed to be the mortal enemy of snakes).

"The great Mantram of Self, pure like crystal, called Hansa, is to be known as the one which counteracts the evil effects of poison. Its Bija is of four kinds: Aum, Kuru, Kunde, Swaha.

"An intelligent worshipper should assign Kuru to his throat, Kunda to the calves, and Swaha to his feet. This Nyasa is called Yugaha. Serpents leave the house in which this Mantra is written. Having recited it a thousand times, one should place a thread on his ear. Serpents leave the house in which sugar, after reciting it, is strewn."—*Garuda Purana.*

* * *

"Aum! Swaha! Unto Golden Lines! Unto him who has the form of a fowl." When a person, bitten by a snake, is sprinkled with water to the accompaniment of continuous unbroken repetition of this Mantra, the poison is destroyed.

* * *

"Aum, Pakshi (Bird) Swaha!" He who repeats this Mantra one hundred thousand times, destroys poison by his very presence.

* * *

"A snake-charmer by eating a betel, consecrated with the Mantra 'Hrim! Obeisance to the White-Winged Bird (Garuda)!', is sure to cure a patient bitten by the snake called Gonasha."—*Agni Purana.*

* * *

The *Agni Purana* recommends the following Mantra and Nyasa for counteracting the effects of all poisons:

Mantra: "Aum! Obeisance to the Blue-Throated Deity! (This Mantra, invoking Shiva, should be psychically located in the Mantrin's heart). Aum! Obeisance to Garuda, the Crested Bird of Heaven! (Locate this in the root of the Mantrin's hair). O Thou! Neutraliser of all poison! O Thou, who dispersest the hosts of demons, frighten, strike terror and trample them under thy feet (this part of the Mantra should be contemplated as protecting the body as a coat-of-mail). O Thou whose sway none can dispute, Vam! Hum! Phut! (This Mantra should be contemplated as a powerful weapon). Obeisance to Thee, O Thou, dreaded by all!

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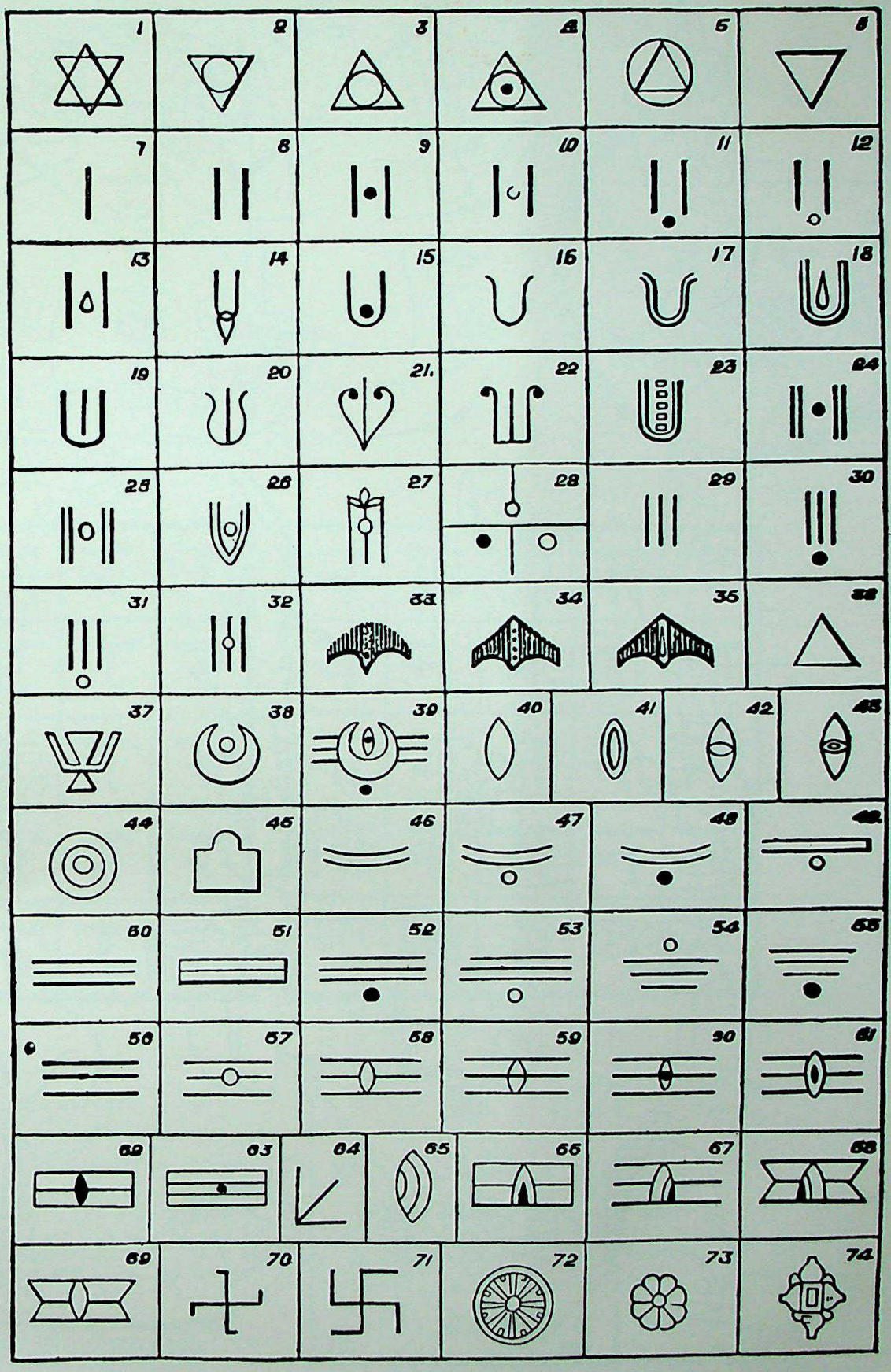

49. CASTE MARKS OF DIFFERENT SECTS
(*From* Birdwood's *Indian Arts*)

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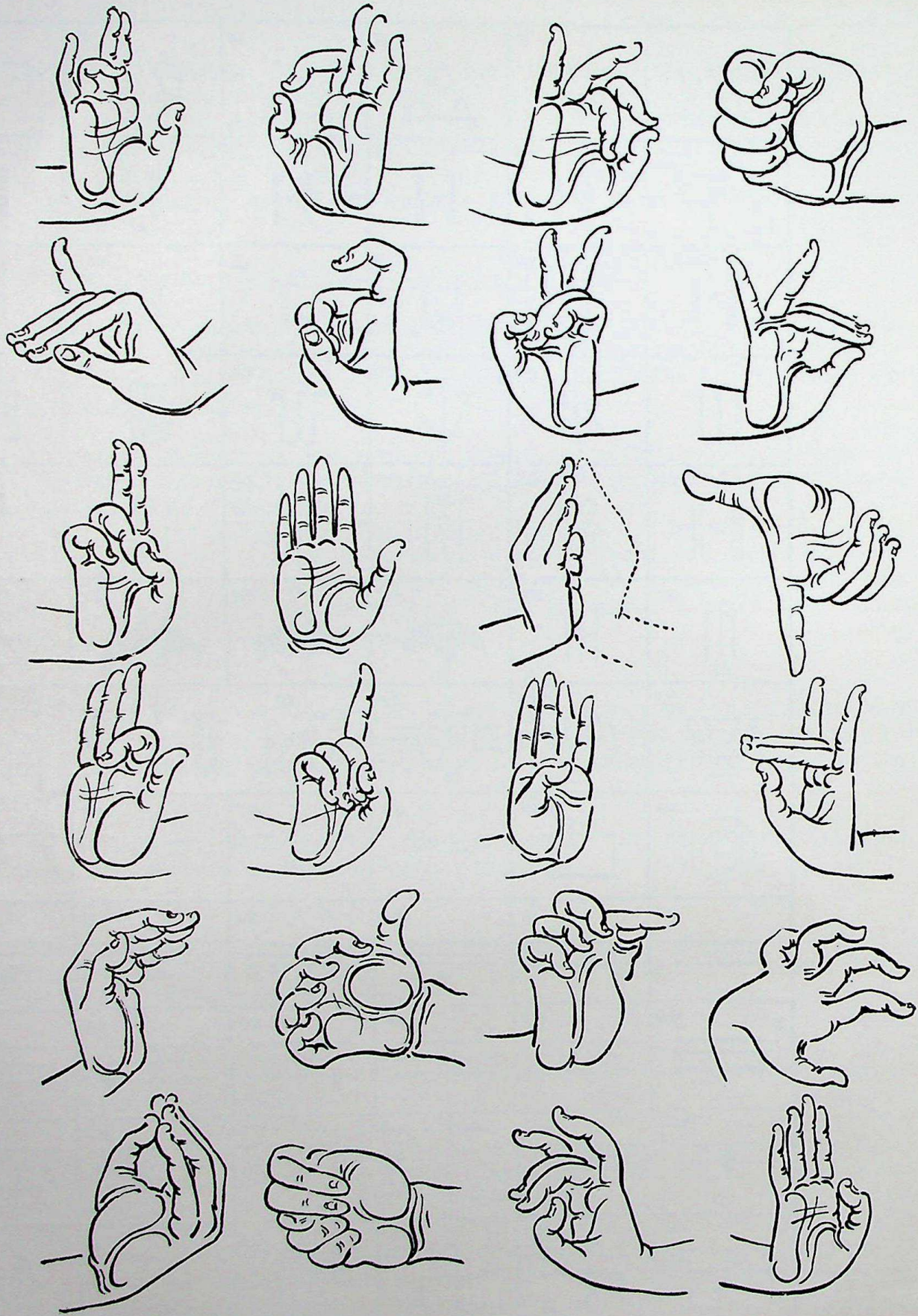

50. MUDRAS OR GESTURES OF THE HAND
In Indian dance, ritual and sorcery, Mudras play an important part

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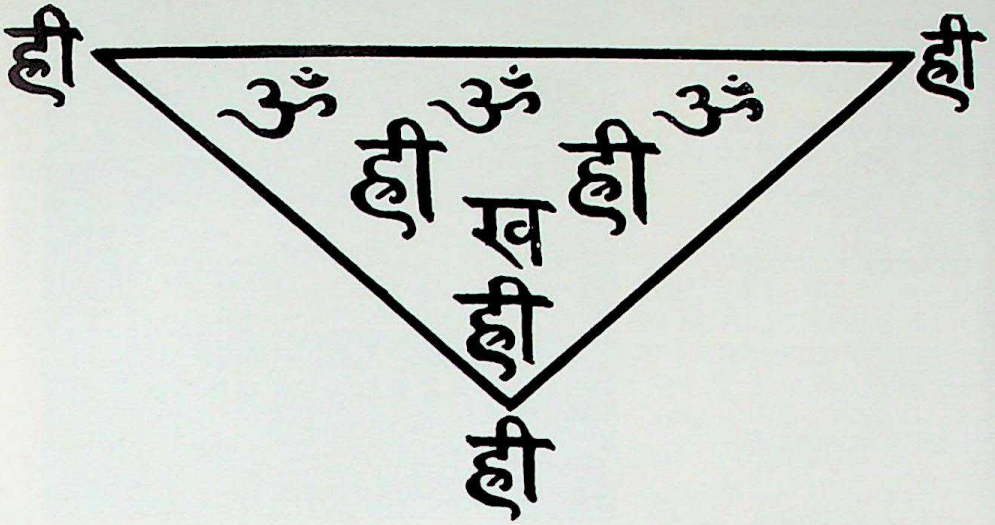

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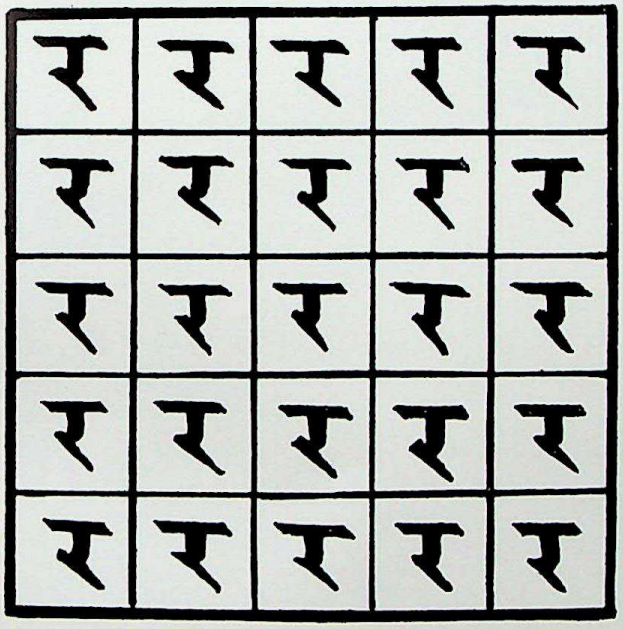
51. THIS CHARM, IF WORN ON THE BODY, IS BELIEVED TO CURE HEADACHE

52

52. THIS AMULET IS INTENDED TO WARD OFF ALL EVIL INFLUENCES



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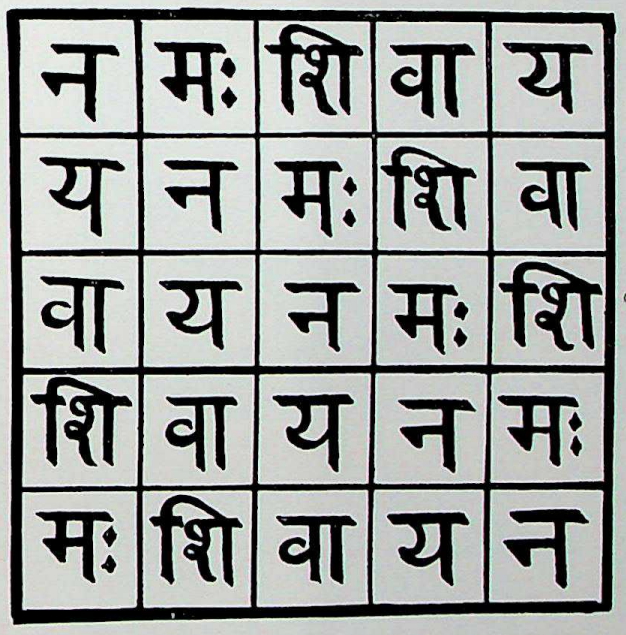
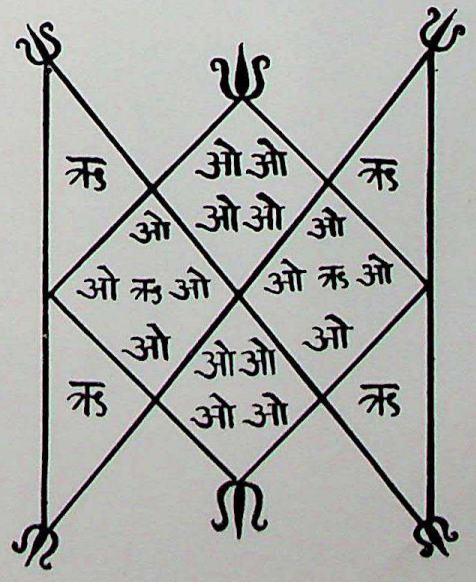


54

53. A RUN-AWAY WIFE MIGHT RETURN TO HER HOMESTEAD IF THIS CHARM IS BURIED IN THE ASH-PIT OF HER HOUSE

54. THIS CHARM WITH THE INSCRIBED MANTRA REPEATED OVER IT 101 TIMES IS BELIEVED TO AFFORD PROTECTION FROM ENEMIES WHEN WORN ON THE WAIST

55. THIS CHARM IS INTENDED TO EXORCISE EVIL SPIRITS THAT HAVE POSSESSED A WOMAN. IT IS TO BE BURIED WITH THE NAME OF THE AFFLICTED WRITTEN ON IT IN HER KITCHEN



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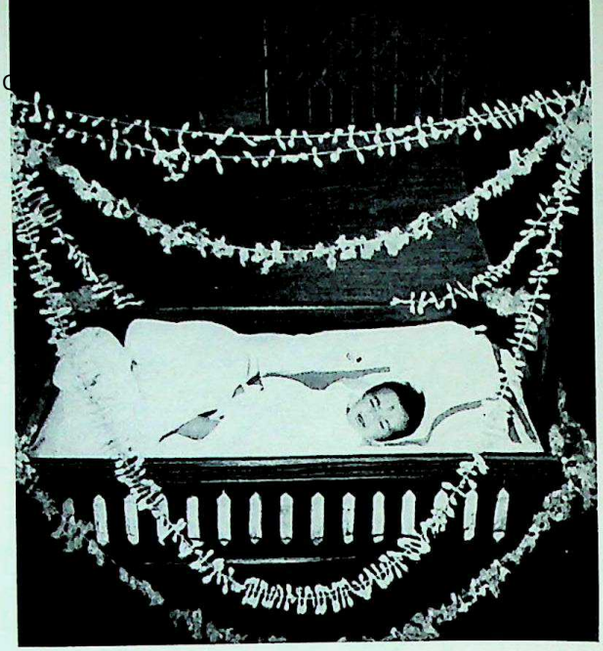
56. HOMA OR FIRE RITUAL
Fire is continually fed with ghee to the accompaniment of chanting of Mantras. Homa is performed to gain various ends
(*Photo*: N. Ramakrishna)

57. A MODERN SNAKE-CHARMER WITH THE GRAMOPHONE SUBSTITUTED FOR THE AGE-OLD PIPE
(From *Wonderful India*, Times of India and Statesman publication)

58. BABY'S CRADLE WITH RITUAL PROTECTION AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS
(*Photo*: N. Ramakrishna)

59. KARNA BHUSHANAM OR PROTECTION ON A CHILD'S EAR AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS
(*Photo*: N. Ramakrishna)

60 & 61. SACRIFICIAL IMPLEMENTS WITH MAGICAL FIGURES AND SYMBOLS
(*From* Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*)



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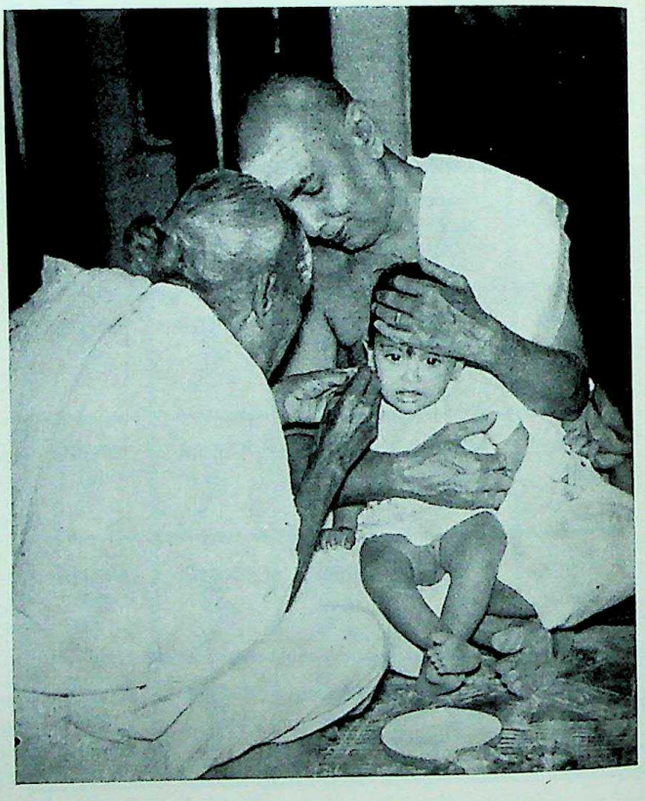

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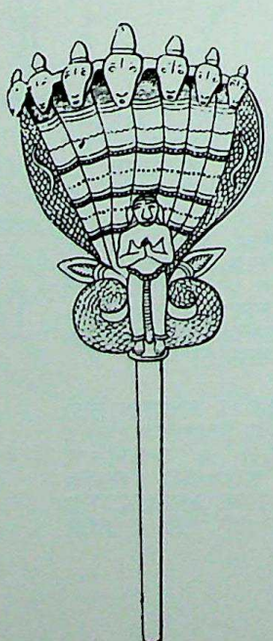

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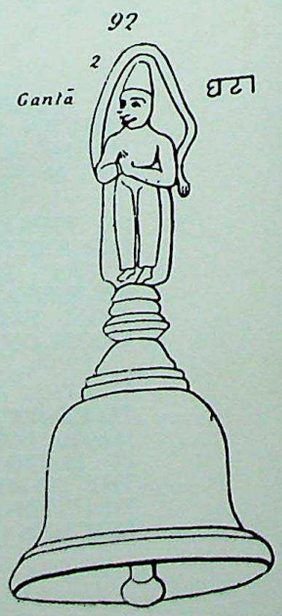

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Terrify and burn all to ashes! (Locate this Mantra in the region of the eyes.)"

The Mantrin should now contemplate the mystic lotus representing the orb of the universe. The eight petals of the lotus pointing to the eight directions are the abode of the guardians of the universe represented by the vowels of the alphabet. The pollens of the lotus represent the seven states of beatitude, and are denoted by the Sapta Vargas of the alphabet (see Chapter 3 for Vargas); this should first be contemplated in the heart of the Mantrin and, on its gaining maturity by meditation, should be brought down to the left palm by psychic transposition.

The Mantrin should now locate by Dhyana (concentration) the different letters representing the beatific rays of the Mantra on the tips of the fingers of his right hand. The rays should be contemplated as expanding into the form of a quadrilateral figure of yellow colour absorbing the quintessence of the earth, sacred to Indra, king of the gods. A second halo or Mandala, in the form of a semi-circle or a lotus cut in two, should be contemplated as of white colour containing the quintessence of water, sacred to Varuna, god of the ocean. The third beatific halo should be contemplated as a cross inscribed within a triangle as composed of the quintessence of fire, presided over by Agni, the god of fire. And finally, the exterior Mandala should be conceived as a rim of dusky or black colour consisting of ether, sacred to the wind-god.

Kara-Nyasa (consecration of the hand) is to be done as follows: The principal letters of the Mantra should be located in the phalanges of the different fingers which should be considered as their proper mansions. The fingers should be contemplated as encircled by a golden serpent, and four out of the principal letters should be fixed in the halo. Of the remaining, the first letter should be fixed in the middle phalange of the little finger. The letters presided over by ghosts and malignant spirits (for such letters, see Chapter 3) should be located in the tips of the fingers; then the letters indicating the five senses should be located in the other phalanges of the fingers.

"The Mantrin should now contemplate a fiery image of Garuda, about the height of two thumbs. The god should be conceived as possessing a golden complexion from knee to the navel, coloured like the snowflake from navel upwards, saffron-coloured round the neck, and with ravenous black hair. His pinions should be contemplated as co-extensive with infinite space, and reflecting his blue, hooked beak from which hangs the dreaded serpent Chandra Sarpa." This vision of Garuda should always be in the mind of the Mantrin who wishes to cure the poison caused by snake-bite.

A blow with the fist thus charged with the Mantra by a person, keeping in his mind the above-noted vision of Garuda, is said to neutralize the ill effects of all poison. The mere waving of his hand over the wound caused by snake-bite is expected to arrest the spread of venom. While using the fist for striking the wound, the Mantrin should repeat the following Mantra:

"The Bhu-vija Mantra, the Lord of Mantras, consisting of five syllables is descended from the celestial region! May all poison be destroyed by its power!"

Further, water consecrated by repeating over it this Mantra is believed to be a cure for snake-bite when sprinkled over the wound.

PEDIATRICS

(Infants are believed to be particularly susceptible to the attack of malignant

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spirits. In Indian villages, every grandmother knows a cure or two for the ailments that afflict children).

"On the day of its birth, an infant is very susceptible to the baneful influence of the monstress Grahi. An infant possessed by the spirit refuses food, tosses its head and writhes in agony. For the cure of the child, offerings composed of fish, meat, wine, perfumes, garlands of flowers, lighted wicks and scented resin should be made to Grahi. The body of the child should be plastered with a paste of Dhataki, Lodhra, Manjishta, Tala and Sandal-wood.

"The monstress Bhishani possesses an infant on the second day of its birth. The afflicted child is oppressed by a fatiguing cough; respiration becomes difficult and the child writhes in agony. The monstress can be exorcised by burning incense of the substance known as Mahishaksha. The body of the child should be washed in goat's urine; a paste of Apamarga and Sandal-wood should be applied to the child's tongue at intervals, and the lying-in chamber should be fumigated with the vapours of Goshringa, Godanti and hairs. And offerings should be made to the monstress as stated before.

"The monstress Gantali may possess a child on the third day of its birth. The child cries incessantly and its body undergoes convulsions; all food is refused by the child. For cure, the body of the child should be smeared with a preparation composed of Kshira, Anjana, Godanta and scrapings of ivory, all pasted together in goat's milk. The chamber should be fumigated with the vapour of Naka, Raji, and the leaves of the Vilva tree. Offerings should also be made to the monstress as stated before.

"A child is likely to be possessed by the monstress Kakoli on the fourth day of its birth. The disease is marked by such symptoms as the jerking of limbs, loss of appetite, foaming at the mouth and the upturned position of the dilated pupils. The remedy is in smearing the body of the child with an unguent composed of scrapings of ivory, the slough of a snake and the urine of a horse. The lying-in chamber should be fumigated with vapours of Raji and Nimba leaves, and fanned with loose hairs while offerings of Masa pulse or Kalmasha should be made to the demoness.

"The monstress Hansadika may possess the child on the fifth day of its birth. If possessed, the child breathes with long, updrawn breath, stretches out its hands and closes its fists. For cure, offerings of fish should be made to the possessing spirit, and the child's body should be smeared with an unguent composed of Mesha, Shringi, Vala, Lodhra, Shila and Tala.

"On the sixth day of its birth, a child is likely to be possessed by the demoness Shashti. As symptoms of possession, the child cries incessantly without apparent cause, starts up at night in fright, refuses food and suffers from contortions of limbs. Offerings of fish should be made to Shashti, and the body of the child should be smeared with an unguent of Raji, Guggula, Kushta and scrapings of ivory, and fumigated with the vapours of the same substances.

"A child, possessed by Muktakesi, on the seventh day of its birth, develops the following symptoms: the child emits a peculiar fetid smell; yawning and lassitude supervene, indicating low vitality; the child cries incessantly, refuses to be consoled, and is oppressed by a harassing cough. The remedy is in smearing the body with powdered tiger-nails, mixed with water fumigated with the vapour of the same article.

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"Shri Dandi is the monstress that possesses children on the eighth day of their birth. The possessed child constantly looks around with a vacant gaze; constant crying and oppressive cough are other symptoms. Offerings of fish should be made to the spirit, and the body of the child should be fumigated with the vapours of Vacha, dried rice and garlic.

"The malady that afflicts the child on the ninth day of its birth is ascribed to the malignant influence of the monstress Mahagrahi. The child looks agitated, breathes with difficulty and tries to swallow its fists. The remedy is in smearing the body of the child with a paste of red sandal-wood and Kushtha, and in fumigation with the vapours of the burnt hairs of a monkey.

"On the tenth day of its birth a child is particularly susceptible to the baneful influence of the monstress Rodini. The afflicted child is restless, cries incessantly, and its body turns blue and emits a sweet odour. The treatment is the fumigation of the child's body with the vapours of Nimba leaves and smearing it with an unguent of Raji and the milk of the Sarja tree. Offerings of Kalmashaka should be made to the monstress."—*Agni Purana.*

* * *

While the danger from malignant spirits is more or less continuous for the first ten days of a child's birth, later it trails off to weekly, monthly and annual attacks till the young man or woman reaches the seventeenth year. There are detailed descriptions of the evil spirits that afflict children in each of these periods, and prescriptions for prevention and cure are given in the *Agni Purana*; the curious are recommended to look up this text for further information.

* * *

The following Mantra is said to be effective generally for the cure of maladies peculiar to children: "Aum! Obeisance to the Matris (Divine Mothers). Break, break the combined influences that have afflicted the child. O ye Matris, attack and attack, sever and sever, overpower and overpower, cast down and cast down, this malady caused by the baneful influence of monstresses. Set right the distemper that afflicts this boy (or girl). Make him (or her) whole and sound. Protect him (or her) from the attack of all malignant planets. This is at the command of Rudra.

"Obeisance to thee, O goddess Chamunda! Aum! Hrum! Hram! Hrim! Drive away all malignant planets. Hrum! Let the Gujhyakas go elsewhere by a different route. This is what Rudra commands."

* * *

The following incantation is believed to be good for the general welfare of children : "May the gods Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Skanda and the Ganas, together with the goddesses Lakshmi and Gouri, preserve this child. May fever and distempers leave the child for good."—*Agni Purana.*

A RITE OF EXORCISM

The spirit Vinayaka who has possessed a person (see Chapter 1) can be exorcised in the following manner:

"The afflicted person should take his seat on a sacrificial platform and should perform religious ablutions under the auspices of the asterism Hasta or Pushya

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or on the occasion of the sun's passing from one sign of the zodiac into another. He should rub his body with the cake of white mustard and clarified butter, and his head with the powder of the drugs known as Sarvoushadhi and Sarvagandhi. Then the contents of four pitchers of water containing earth obtained from a stable, an elephant enclosure, an ant-hill and the confluence of two streams, as well as Rochana, sandal and scented gum-resin consecrated with Mantras, should be emptied over his head. The Mantra to be repeated on the occasion is: 'I wash thee with waters obtained from a hundred streams, hallowed by the touch of holy sages and the Lord of Celestials. May these waters purify thee. May Varuna, the sun-god, Brihaspati, Indra, the wind-god and the seven immortal sages give thee wealth and peace. May the evil fate that sticks to your hairs and the ill-luck that hangs over your brows and blights your eye-sight be removed by the efficacy of this consecrated water.'

"Then the officiating priest should obtain a vessel of Kusha grass and mustard oil and empty it on the head of the possessed person, with a ladle held in his right hand, repeating the Mantra 'libation to Mita, libation to Sanmita, libation to Shalaka, libation to Tankata, libation to Kushmanda and libation to Rajputra.' The term 'Svaha' should be repeated at the end of each recital. Then oblations of raw fish, Chitra flowers, cooked fish, boiled rice, radish, cake, curds, thickened milk, Payasa, Modaka and treacle should be offered from a vessel placed on a cushion of Kusha grass at a window in a house overlooking a junction of four roads.

"The mother of Vinayaka should then be invoked, and offerings of Durva grass, mustard seeds and flowers should be made to her. The final libation should be poured on the sacrificial fire and the following prayer should be said: 'Grant me, O goddess of good luck, the boon of beauty, wealth, progeny and fulfilment of all desires.'

"After the ritual, Brahmins should be feasted and clothes presented to the ritualist officiating at the ceremony."—*Agni Purana.*

HOW TO PREPARE KAVACHAS AND LOCKETS

(The efficacy of Kavachas or protective armours to ward off evil influences, and of lockets is widely believed in in India. Of late the trade in these has been commercialised and regular advertisements of Kavachas and lockets can be seen in the Indian Press).

The Mantra known as Trailokya Mohana (charmer of the three worlds) beginning with "Aum! Kshoum! Shivaye Namah!" counteracts the influence of evil stars on mental faculties. Written on a Bhurja leaf with Gorochana with the names of Shiva, Ganesha and Lakshmi, it may be enclosed in a metal case and worn on the neck or arms to ward off all evil influences.

* * *

The following Mantra, written on a Naga leaf inscribed with the figures of the eight Matrikas (see Chapter 9) and worn as an amulet, affords protection against the attack of enemies: "O goddess, Kili, Vikili, Desha Kili, who destroys all demons! Kill O You Sankhini Uma, who wields a sword in your hand. Kill, O, You beloved wife of the dreadful Rudra. O, the greatest of goddesses, from whose mouth meteors shoot forth as showers. O goddess who vomits dreadful

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fire! O goddess with the emaciated thighs! O Alumvusha, trample the wicked under your feet. May those who look at me be spell-bound in awe. O goddess, who resides in the heart of the mighty Rudra, assume a peaceful mien and protect my body."—*Agni Purana.*

* * *

To prepare Mrityunjaya Prakaranam or the amulet to prevent premature death:

Draw a lotus Yantra and write in it the name of the person who is to wear the amulet; the object of the amulet, namely, prevention of premature death, should be written in the petals of the lotus. The Pranava "Aum" should be written on either side, and the "Hum-kar" Mantra in the angles of the Yantra. The vowels and consonants of the alphabet should also be written on the petals; all these should, again, be enclosed in the letters of the Mantra inscribed thereon. The writing must be made in a compound of saffron and Rochana (yellow pigment) or of camphor and sandal paste. The material on which the Mantra is written should be tied with a string, the threads of which have already been rubbed with bees' wax and worshipped at the mouth of a pitcher.

This charm, when worn by a person, would make him healthy and strong, and would prevent and frustrate physical attack by enemies; it also guarantees long life.—*Agni Purana.*

MISCELLANEOUS

"The slough of Prachalaka (a bird?) filled with the ashes of the corpse of a man dead from snake-bite can render beasts invisible."—*Artha Sastra.*

* * *

"Having pulled out both the right and left eyeballs of a cat, camel, wolf, boar, porcupine, vaguli (?) naptr (?) crow and owl or of any one, two, three or as many of such animals as roam at night, one should reduce them to two kinds of powder. Whoever anoints his own right eyeball with the powder of the left eyes, and his left eyeball with the powder of the right eyeballs can clearly see things, even in pitch dark, at night."—*Artha Sastra.*

* * *

To win a law-suit, repeat the Ganapati Mantra, "Aum! Gam! Ganapataye, Svaha!" eight thousand times; the hair on the crown of the head of the person should be tied into a knot at the time of repeating the Mantra.

* * *

Eight sticks of Catechu wood, inspired by the Mantra, "Aum! Jum! Sam! Hum! Phut!" repeated over them 1008 times, and buried under a house will prevent its destruction from lightning.

* * *

A dart charged with the same Mantra, whirled over one's head and shown to the sky will neutralize the influence of evil planets and prevent death by lightning and by the bite of venomous reptiles.

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The Mantra, "Hara! Kshara! Amla! Vashat!" added with the Bindu Sadashiva, will ward off dangers from lightning.

* * *

The Mantra, "Aum! Lasat! Khaksha!" destroys the enemies of the field like pests, birds and goblins.

* * *

A man seeking to improve his social position should constantly repeat, in his mind, the Mantra of the *Atharva Veda* beginning with "Ahante Bhagna."

* * *

A person confined in a cell by another or living in a prison will obtain freedom by repeating the Mantra, "Ye Me Pasha. . . ." (the fetters that bind me) of the *Atharva Veda.*

* * *

"When the paste, prepared from animals such as Chuchundari (musk rat), Khanjarita (?) with the urine of a horse, is applied to the chains with which the legs of a man are bound, they will be broken to pieces."—*Artha Sastra.*

* * *

"Whenever one may happen to see the corpse burnt or just being burnt, of a Brahmin who had (while alive) kept sacrificial fire, there one should fast for three nights; and having on the day of the star Pushya, formed a sack from the garment of the corpse of a man dead from natural causes, and having filled the sack with the ashes of the Brahmin's corpse, one may put the sack on one's back and walk invisible to others."—*Artha Sastra.*

* * *

"The stinking oil extracted from Kaidarya (*Vangueria spinosa*) removes madness."—*Artha Sastra.*

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5. *Human and Animal Sacrifices*

ONE OF the most widely practised forms of primitive religion throughout the world, was the offering of human or animal victims to the deities, and it survives to this day in many forms even in religions that have officially rejected sacrificial rituals. When refined sentiments began to condemn the shedding of human blood for the pleasure of the gods as objectionable, animal sacrifices were substituted for those of human beings. We read in the Old Testament that Abraham, on the express command of the deity, untied his son Isaac from the sacrificial post and offered a lamb in his place; this story perhaps indicates the departure, on the part of the founder of Judaism, from the ancient custom of sacrificing the first-born for the pleasure of the deity. This practice was widely prevalent among the Phoenicians and it is even said that the fall of Carthage, the Phoenician rival of Rome, was brought about by the impiety of Carthagenian nobles who substituted the children of slaves in place of their own for human sacrifices to their deities. Even so great a philosopher and saint as Socrates considered sacrifices as conducive to human good. For in his last dialogue to his friends, after drinking the hemlock, Socrates "addressing Crito, told him that he had vowed to sacrifice a cock to Aesculapius and begged him to accomplish this vow on his behalf."

In India, when the ancient Vedic religion developed its ritual, sacrifices played an important role. The practice was known as Karma Yoga (or the Yoga of Action) and the *Brahmanas* or the texts dealing with it give elaborate instructions as to how sacrifices were to be performed. These texts as they stand at present would indicate that large numbers of animals were daily sacrificed, and occasionally a human victim.

"The *Brahmanas* set forth a list of five victims among animals, man, sheep and goat; in practice, the last three are the most common victims, and the goat is the most usual of all. Wild animals, fish, birds, the pig and dog are excluded."* Though human sacrifice is mentioned in the *Brahmanas* and in the *Srauta Sutras* (aphorisms based on *Vedas* dealing mainly with ritual) at no time in the history of Brahmanic ritual was it widely practised. "The human sacrifice as prescribed in the *Sankhyayana Srauta Sutra* is based closely on Asvamedha or horse sacrifice. While there the chief victims are the horse and a Gomrga or hornless goat, here, a man is added, a Brahmin or Kshatriya bought at the price of a thousand cows and a hundred cattle; he is permitted like the horse, a year of freedom in which he can do as he wishes, save that he must remain chaste. . . . The chief queen must lie with the slain victim as beside the horse in Asvamedha. A nominal offering of a large number of other men, 166 at 11 posts is mentioned in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, but we have every reason to believe that this is merely priestly imagination unless as is

* A. B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda.*

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possible, the conception of the priest was occasionally made real by the king."*

Anyway, from Vedic literature it would appear that the Purushamedha (human sacrifice) was a royal prerogative like the Asvamedha. But it was otherwise with animal sacrifice. Vedic ritual, as set forth in the *Brahmanas*, was mainly concerned with the sacrifice of animals, eating of the meat of animals thus sacrificed and drinking intoxicating beverages like the Soma. On festive occasions, the number of victims sacrificed often ran into thousands.

It was, in fact, against this sacrificial religion and the shedding of blood for the pleasure of the gods that the Buddha and Mahavira, the founders of Buddhism and Jainism, successfully revolted. With the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, and the ideals of Ahimsa they taught, sacrificial religion fell into disrepute; during the Hindu revival which drove Buddhism out of India, we find Brahmins staunch supporters of Ahimsa and vegetarianism. In fact, all later Hindu law-givers prohibit meat-eating and drinking of spirituous liquors among Brahmins. Those Brahmins who were partial to the ancient Vedic ritual were obliged to go underground and practise meat-eating and ritualistic drinking in the secret Tantric cults (see Chapter 9).

The rise of Vaishnavism in the twelfth century of the Christian era and its rapid spread throughout India gave another impetus to the forces that were working against sacrificial religion; for Vaishnavism, like Buddhism and Jainism, had definite leanings towards Ahimsa and considered ritualistic shedding of blood as objectionable.

With all this, sacrificial religion had its votaries throughout India. While Brahmins dissociated themselves with sacrifices of animals in public, in the Tantric cults which were practised secretly throughout the country, sacrifice of animals was an important feature; in shrines dedicated to the goddess Kali, the Brahmins, though reluctant to perform the actual killing of the animals, superintended and approved of the popular practice of offering victims and shedding of blood at the altars. Among the aborigines and the lower classes, sacrifice of goats, buffaloes and birds was part of public worship and during village festivals known as Jatras a large number of animals, particularly buffaloes, were sacrificed. In most of the shrines dedicated to the goddess Kali, animal sacrifice was part of daily worship, and the main feasts of the goddess often claimed victims in thousands.

Nor were human sacrifices completely eliminated by the influence of Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism. Though in regular Brahmanic public ritual it was never practised after the Vedic religion fell into disuse, it was secretly practised in certain special shrines dedicated to Kali or Shiva; among the aboriginal tribes human sacrifice was much more common, a notable example being the Meriah sacrifice of the Khonds (of this more presently) which was a regular part of their religion till the British stopped it in the nineteenth century.

In the literature of India and in the accounts of travellers we find references to the prevalence of human sacrifice in medieval India. In Bhavabhuti's *Malati-Madhava* (8th century A.D.) we read that the heroine Malati was saved from the sacrificial stake in the temple of the goddess Chamunda by the hero Madhava. Huien Tsang, who visited India in the seventh century A.D., mentions that he was caught by a gang of dacoits along with certain others; it would appear that the dacoits had a custom by which they had to sacrifice the most handsome of their captives to their deity and Huien Tsang, according to the pilgrim's own account,

* Ibid.

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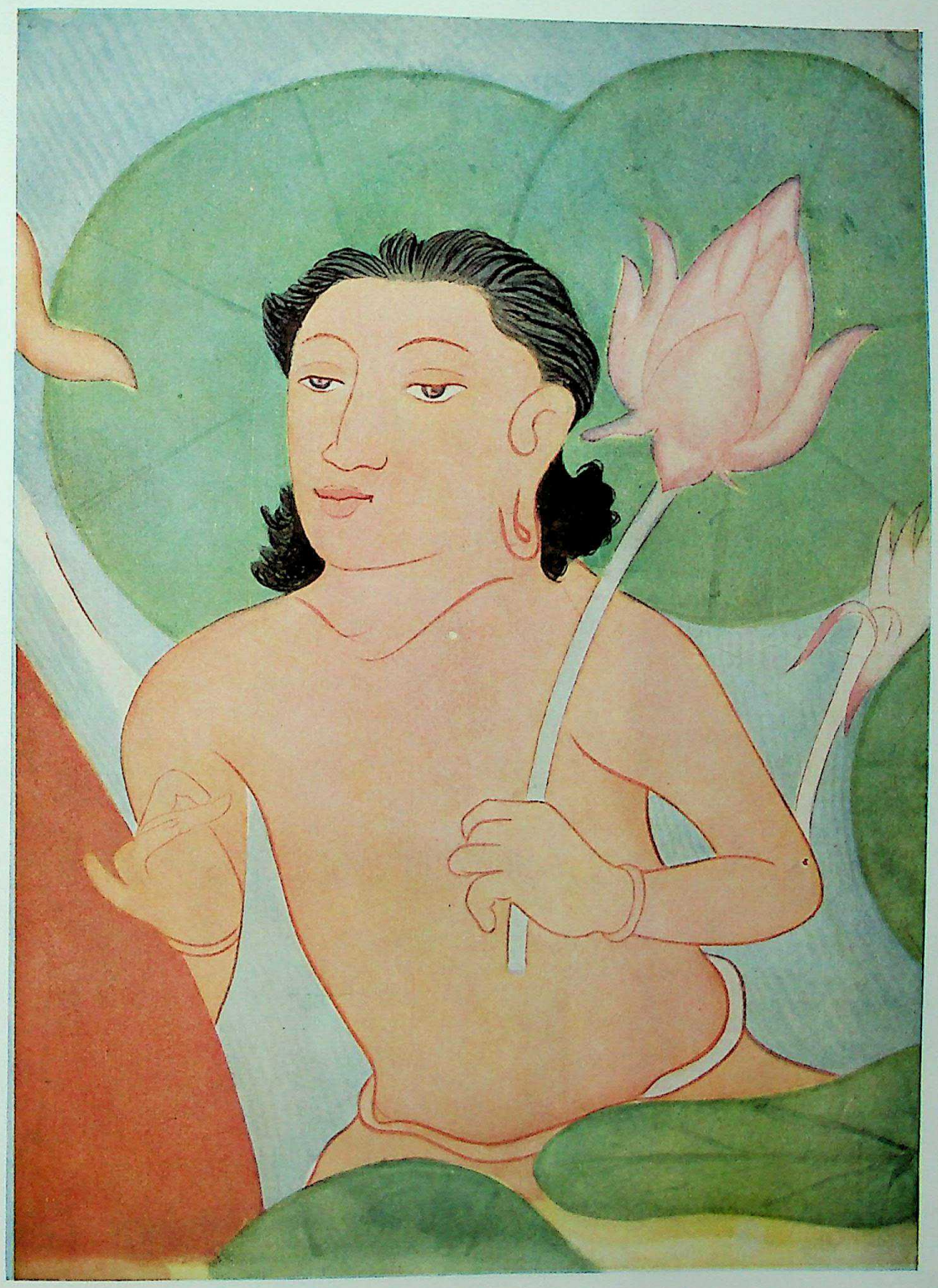

A. Gandharva. Fresco from Sittanavasal
(From N. C. Mehta's *Studies in Indian Painting*)

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was deemed the most handsome and was taken to the shrine of the deity but was miraculously saved.

The Thugs, the notorious gang of stranglers of eighteenth-century India, were inspired more by the duty of human sacrifice to goddess Bhavani than love of plunder. According to their belief, the main motive of Thuggee was providing victims for Bhavani, and the spoils were merely the wages for an act of piety; so at least the sacred lore of the Thugs maintained. Brahma the creator and Shiva the destroyer, according to Thug theology, were always at variance, and Shiva could not destroy fast enough what Brahma created and as a result there was overcrowding throughout the three worlds. Unable to cope with the speed at which Brahma worked, Shiva sought the aid of his wife, Bhavani. This goddess, in order to help her husband, called a conference of her select devotees for instruction in the work she had in mind; in their presence she made an image of a man, infused him with life and strangled him with a handkerchief. She then instructed her votaries in this art of destruction and sent them out into the world to hunt and destroy humans; and the Thugs claimed to be the lineal descendants of these favoured individuals.

The initiation of novices to Thuggee usually took place during the Dussera festival, the main feast of the wife of Shiva with her many names and functions, and the principal item of the initiation ceremony was the leading out of the young Thug by a Guru who dedicated him to the goddess with the following invocation: "O Bhavani, Mother of the Universe, whose votaries we are, receive this, thy servant; vouchsafe unto thim thy protection; grant to us an omen that may assure us of thy consent."*

The Thugs were pious people who did nothing without the consent of the goddess expressed through omens. On setting out on a man-hunting expedition, "the leader took a Lota filled with water and suspended it from a string which he held in his mouth, and, followed by the rest of the band, advanced some distance on the appointed route. Then turning his face in the direction they proposed to take, he placed his left hand on his chest, raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Mother of the universe, protectress and patroness of our order! If this expedition is pleasing to thee, vouchsafe to us thy help and give us an omen of thy approbation.' "†

Then every one waited in silence for an omen. The twittering of a tree-owl or the braying of an ass would be favourable, whereas a hare crossing the path would be a very bad omen. "The bark of a jackal was, however, the worst of all omens, and an orthodox Thug would at once abandon any enterprise that was forbidden by such an ominous sign. To hear a crow call while flying was enough to make a band give up an expedition and return home."

It was forbidden for Thugs to kill a woman, every woman being considered a replica of the goddess Bhavani. The Thug was a regular Tantric in this respect, and the scrupulous even refrained from molesting parties in which there were women.

Further, it was believed by Thugs that their victims obtained salvation inasmuch as they were offerings to the goddess. This at least was the view expressed by a captured Thug to Sleeman, the celebrated Thug-hunter. When questioned about the murder of certain religious mendicants for sheer sport, the Thug declared:

* C. Low, *Secret Asia.*

† Ibid.

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"We have unlimited authority from the goddess for committing murder, and the mendicants had obtained, through us, salvation more speedily than otherwise they would have, by natural death; hence no sin can possibly be attached to us."

It is remarkable that in Thuggee there was complete Hindu-Muslim unity, an ideal kings like Akbar and saints like Nanak tried in vain to attain. The Muslim, on initiation, took the oath of allegiance to the goddess by holding the Koran. Muslim Thugs usually sacrificed a goat to the goddess at the time of the departure on an expedition, and celebrated the Dussera Feast with the Hindus. No Thugs have ever fallen out on religious grounds.

CAUSES AND OBJECTS OF HUMAN SACRIFICE

The main motives that have inspired human sacrifice, whether among primitive peoples or comparatively higher cultures, can be said to be: (1) The highest altruism, (2) satisfaction of divine vengeance, (3) a belief that deities or malignant spirits of cannibalistic nature should be appeased by offerings of human flesh and blood, and (4) notions of magical potency of human flesh, blood, heart, liver, embryo, etc. We shall now deal with each of these separately and see how far it has actuated human sacrifice in India.

ALTRUISM

The idea that a man in order to show his devotion must surrender his most cherished possession to the deity, is common to all religions. In many religions this idea took the form of offering the first-born to the deity, and even in certain well developed religions the practice was prevalent in the ancient world. The Phoenicians, as already stated, sacrificed their first-born to the deity, and in Carthage, the aristocracy showed a tendency to substitute the children of slaves in place of their own.

Similar customs were prevalent among Indo-Aryans too. In the *Aitereya Brahmana* we read the story of king Harichandra who vowed to offer his son to god Varuna. The king's heart, however, failed at the last moment and he managed to get the young Brahmin Sunashepa, son of Agigarta, for the sacrifice. The boy, it is related, was saved by the intervention of gods.

A man has, however, a greater possession than his first-born and that is his own life. In the legends, art and literature of India there are traces of a widespread practice of humans offering their own lives to the deity. The more direct forms of this kind of devotion was known as "head-offering," and in ancient and medieval Indian art can be found bas-reliefs of headless trunks of humans who had thus immolated themselves. The offering was made either as a thanksgiving for favours received or to substitute one's own life in place of another. Among certain sections of the Hindus there was a firm belief that a dying man could be saved by another offering his own life in place of that of the man on the death-bed. Fathers at times offered their own lives for those of their sons, sons for those of their parents, disciples for Gurus and devoted friends for each other. The idea seems to have been prevalent among some Indian Muslims too; for we have the classical example of Baber who, as already stated, is said to have offered his life for that of his son Humayun who was on his death-bed and saved the young man by his own voluntary death.

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Marco Polo mentions a peculiar custom prevalent in Malabar at the time of his visit; a criminal condemned to death was given freedom if he volunteered to offer his head to the deity. For the few days he was allowed to live, he was not only treated well but was considered a living saint.

Closely allied to religious suicide was the well-known institution of Sati, the burning of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. The rite was so widely practised in medieval India and was given such wide publicity and honour that in most cases the widow willingly mounted the funeral pyre of her husband. The general idea was that a devoted wife must accompany her husband in his journey to the upper regions and enjoy his company in Paradise. The woman who declared her intention to become a Sati was immediately canonised and was taken in procession to the cremation ground, and on her way she gave away ornaments and other souvenirs to onlookers as relics. Her very look was considered capable of bestowing immortality and throngs of people lined up the path marked for her journey. All her sins were believed to be expiated by her supreme sacrifice, which was deemed capable of burning away her husband's sins too and granting him immortality with her.

It is also significant that Agni or the god of fire, the presiding deity of Homa (Sacrifices) was also the presiding god of Sati. He was not only the consumer but also the purifier of all that came in contact with him; besides, there was the anthropomorphic idea that Agni was a hungry, all-consuming deity to feed whom was meritorious. This idea is latent in fire sacrifices, and in the *Mahabharata* we read of the meritorious act of prince Arjuna who gave away to Agni a whole forest and its inhabitants, and allowed none to escape.

During the period of the Muslim invasion of India, the Rajputs who were then ruling North India suffered many reverses, and it was customary for the women to congregate near the palace and on hearing bad news from the battlefield burn themselves in thousands in the terrible rite known as Jauhar. Even now in occasional cases of suicide among Hindu women, the preference is for perishing in the flames in conformity with the ancient notion that if a woman must commit suicide it is better to offer herself to Agni.

DIVINE WRATH

Gods, as is well known, have their moods, and when angered for any reason whatsoever are capable of inflicting punishments on those supposed to be responsible for divine wrath. The wrath or vengeance of Jehovah is the most dreaded scourge in Judaism, and when any Gentile race had given him cause for offence, he commissioned his Chosen People to destroy them completely and make an example of them.

In more imaginative cults mere destruction did not satisfy the deity. A more effective method of appeasing divine wrath was to offer the offending people as victims at the altar of the deity so that he may view with satisfaction the generous flow of the blood of his enemies at his shrine.

In the Tamil classic *Silappadikaram*, written in the early centuries of the Christian era, we read that the king of Madura offered a thousand goldsmiths to the goddess Pattini during one of her feasts, as the goddess was the mortal enemy of goldsmiths because of the execution of her husband, Kovilan, who was falsely accused of theft by the royal goldsmith who himself was a thief. The story is that

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Kovilan and his wife Kannaki (who was later metamorphosed into the goddess Pattini and became the patron saint of Madura) were driven by misfortune to the city of Madura from the Chola country. Kovilan was a wealthy merchant who had lost his wealth but he still had some of the personal ornaments of Kannaki with him and in the city of Madura he took for sale one of the anklets of Kannaki. The royal goldsmith happened to see the ornament which was similar to the queen's anklets, one of which he had stolen. The goldsmith took Kannaki's anklet to the king and accused Kovilan of the theft. The king without making further enquiries ordered the execution of Kovilan which was immediately carried out. On Kannaki coming to know of this, she went about the streets of Madura mutilating her breast and wailing. She sought an audience with the king and proved the innocence of her husband by producing the other anklet which was with her. Struck with remorse at his hasty and thoughtless action, the king fell into a fainting fit and died immediately. Kannaki, because of her chastity and devotion to her husband, was bodily translated into heaven. Soon after, a drought devastated the kingdom of Madura which was attributed to the wrath of Kannaki and the reigning monarch, to appease her, is said to have sacrificed one thousand goldsmiths at her shrine.

The story no doubt is an exaggeration; but it is an exaggeration of a prevailing tendency.

Anyway, such large-scale offering of human victims to satiate divine vengeance was rare in India when compared with certain ancient communities, primitive and fairly civilised, who used to make a holocaust of captives, taken in war, at the shrines of their deities.

BELIEF IN THE CANNIBALISM OF SPIRITS AND DEITIES

An idea that has persisted in primitive cultures and in some sections of advanced Hinduism is that certain deities and spirits have cannibalistic tendencies, and delight in consuming human flesh and blood. Passages in several Tantric texts support this view of human sacrifice.

Apart from regular sacrifices at the shrines of deities believed to be cannibalistic, it was a common practice in certain parts of medieval India to offer, at the commencement of the construction of a building, fort or bridge, a human victim so that any cannibalistic spirit inhabiting the area might desist from evil activities. In the Maharashtra country, "it is common to see a Maharin's shrine near the gate of every fort." Usually the sacrificed Maharin (a woman of the low caste known as Mahar) was canonised and her shrine worshipped.

There is an authentic record of such a human sacrifice having taken place at the time of building the town of Anantasagar by a minister of a Vijayanagar king. For building the town, the Pandu river was dammed in the year 1364. "The embankment was breached soon afterwards, and a daughter of the village headman was sacrificed to the river deity, being built up alive in the repairs of the breach."*

Though such practices have now ceased, traditions die hard in India, and I remember a case in which an engineer engaged in construction work in a village in South India, found himself without his gangs of labour; he was working on a culvert and somehow or other a story spread in the locality that the culvert had been washed away because of the activities of certain spirits, and the engineer

* *Imperial Gazetteer of India.*

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was on the look-out for a suitable human victim, and the labour gangs disappeared overnight lest one of them be caught and sacrificed.

While there are a number of deities in the Hindu pantheon who delight in blood and flesh, the goddess of insatiable thirst and hunger in this respect is Kali and her various forms. She is the favourite of the high and the low, and holds an honoured place in the pantheon; great philosophers like Sankara and Vivekananda were her devotees, and many primitive cults with their bloody rituals have been incorporated in her worship. Bhavani, the patroness of the Thugs, as we have seen, was a form of Kali.

The *Kalika Purana* has a chapter entitled Rudhiraddhyaya or Bloody Chapter which lays down rules for sacrifices of victims "from a human being down to a sheep" and enumerates the merits to be acquired therefrom. Shiva in this text declares: "Give my beloved the flesh of the antelope and the rhinoceros, and she is pleased for five hundred years; by a human sacrifice, performed according to the prescribed rites, Devi is pleased for one thousand years, and by the sacrifice of three men for one hundred thousand years; by human blood and flesh, Kamakshi, Chandika and Bhairavi who assume my shape, are pleased for one thousand years; an oblation of blood which has been rendered pure by holy texts is equal to ambrosia; the head and flesh also afford much delight to the goddess Chandika."

Some of the highly esoteric unpublished Tantric texts deal at greater length with the rituals and merits of human sacrifice.

BELIEF IN THE MAGICAL POTENCY OF HUMAN FLESH AND BLOOD

This ancient belief, fairly common to all primitive cultures, is even today the cause of death to many innocent humans by sorcerers, in India. The use of live embryos for preparing magic balms by lycanthropes has already been noticed. The live heart and liver of humans were considered of particular efficacy in magic by all nations. The large scale human sacrifices performed by ancient American-Indians on the summit of their pyramidical shrines, were inspired by a belief in the magical properties of live human hearts to nourish the sun which was otherwise feared to perish through exhaustion; in fact, they had a legend to the effect that the sun had once nearly perished through human neglect in this matter and their priests, rediscovering the lost art of nourishing the sun, had revived the luminary. Further, we find a large number of magical properties assigned to various parts of the human body. In medieval Europe, for instance, it was believed that the heart of a child, eaten while still warm, rendered the eater invisible, thus aiding him to steal. "Candles made of the fat of virgins were used by burglars to see if any one was awake in the house, as this candle light was invisible to all except the burglars who carried it." Further, "the left thumb of a corpse nine weeks in the grave enables a thief to enter a house at night without rousing the occupants. In Poland, the right hand of a corpse of a suicide may be used to discover stolen goods. In Italy, especially in Sicily, treasure can be unearthed, it is still believed, with the assistance of innocent children."*

Among Indo-Aryans there was an ancient belief that human flesh, blood and bones lent magical strength to building material. From the *Satapatha Brahmana* we gather that "in the building of a great altar for the fire ritual, it was customary to sacrifice five victims, including a man, and to build their heads into the

* Verrier Elwin, *Maria Murder and Suicide*,

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altar and to throw their bodies into the water whence the clay for making of fire-bricks was taken in order to give it abiding strength."*

The Meriah (as the victim was called) sacrifices of the Khonds, which were periodically performed to ensure fertility of the soil and good crops, illustrate best the belief in the magical property of human blood and flesh to fertilize the soil.

"The ceremonies attending the rite, and still more the mode of destroying life vary in different parts of the country. In the Maliahs of Goomsur the sacrifice is offered annually to Thadha Pennoo (the earth goddess) under the effigy of a bird, intended to represent a peacock, with the view of propitiating the deity to grant favourable seasons and crops. The ceremony is performed at the expense of, and in rotation by, certain Mootahs (settlements) composing a community, and connected together from local circumstances . . . . Besides these periodical sacrifices, others are made by a single Mootah and even by individuals. Grown men are the most esteemed as victims, because the most costly. Children are purchased and reared for years with the family of the person who ultimately devotes them to a cruel death, when circumstances are supposed to demand a sacrifice at his hands. They seem to be treated with kindness and, if young, are kept under no restraint; but when old enough to be sensible of the fate that awaits them, they are placed in fetters and guarded. Most of those who were rescued were found to have been sold by their parents or near relatives, a practice which, from what we could learn, is very common. Persons of riper age are kidnapped by wretches who trade in human flesh. The victim must always be purchased. Criminals or prisoners captured in war are not considered fitting subjects. The price is paid indifferently in brass utensils, cattle or corn.

"The Zanee (the priest) who may be of any caste, officiates at the sacrifice but he performs the Puja to the idol through the medium of the Toomba, who must be a Khond child under seven years of age. This child is fed and clothed at public expense, eats with no other person and is subjected to no act deemed impure. For a month prior to the sacrifice there is much feasting and intoxication and dancing round the Meriah who is adorned with garlands, and on the day before the performance of the barbarous rite is stupefied with toddy and made to sit or, if necessary, is bound at the bottom of a post bearing the effigy above described. The assembled multitude then dance round to music and, addressing the earth, say: 'Oh goddess we offer this sacrifice to you. Give us good crops, seasons and health.' After this they address the victim: 'We bought you with a price and did not seize you. Now we sacrifice you according to custom and no sin rests with us.'

"Having thus absolved themselves of the sin of homicide, the victim next day is again intoxicated and anointed with oil; each individual present touches the anointed part and wipes the oil on his own head. All then proceed in procession to the village and its boundaries, preceded by music, bearing the victim and a pole to the top of which is attached a tuft of peacock feathers. On returning to the post which is always placed near the village deity called Zakaree Pennoo and represented by three stones near which the brass effigy in the shape of a peacock is buried, they kill a hog in sacrifice and having allowed the blood to flow into a pit prepared for the purpose, the victim who, if it has been found possible, has previously been made senseless by intoxication is seized and thrown in, and his face pressed down till he is suffocated in the bloody mire amid the noise of instru-

* A. B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda.*

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ments. The Zanee then cuts a piece of flesh from the body and buries it with ceremony near the effigy and the village idol as an offering to the earth. All the rest afterwards go through the same form and carry the bloody prize to their villages where the same rites are performed, part being interred near the village idol and little bits on the boundaries. The head and face remain untouched and the bones, when bare, are buried with these in the pit. After this horrid ceremony has been completed a buffalo calf is brought in front of the post, and its forefeet having been cut off, is left there till the following day. Women dressed in male attire, and armed as men, then drink, dance and sing round the spot; the calf is killed and eaten, and the Zanee is dismissed with a present of rice, a hog or calf."

Among the Khonds of Chinna Ki Medi, while the main features of the Meriah sacrifice remained the same, there was a slight variation in the method of killing; instead of a bird, the sacrificial post carried the effigy of an elephant which could be revolved on the post. The victim was tied to the proboscis of the effigy, "and amidst the shouts and yells of the excited multitude of Khonds, is whirled rapidly round. At a given signal by the officiating Zanee, the crowd rush in, seize the Meriah and with their knives cut the flesh off the shrieking wretch as long as life remains. He is then cut down, the skeleton burnt and the horrid orgies are over."*

The Khonds have a legend that explains the origin of Meriah sacrifices. Formerly, it is said, the earth was all wet and produced but few plants. One day, while picking berries from the scant vegetation, Karaboodi, the mythical mother of mankind, hurt her finger on a bramble and a drop of blood fell to the ground. There was an immediate change in the surface of the earth. The marshy land became dry, and a lush verdure spread over the earth. Seeing this miracle, Karaboodi prevailed upon her son to cut a piece of flesh from her back, mince it and bury bits in the wet regions, and all these were converted into dry fertile soil. She then instituted human sacrifice, and ordained that the earth, in order to yield crops in plenty, should be periodically nourished by human blood and flesh.

Verrier Elwin, well known for his splendid work among the Khonds and other wild tribes of India, gives another interesting account, current among the Bison Maria of Bastar, of the discovery of the magical properties of human liver and the origin of human sacrifice among the Khonds. "The first person to practise magic was Nandraj Guru. All the gods and the dead went to him to learn the art. At one time seven gods were being taught by him daily; one day a Maria of the Maja clan was digging roots in the jungle when he heard voices and went stealthily to see what was happening. From behind a tree he saw Nandraj Guru teaching the seven gods. Every day the Maria went to the place and overheard everything that was said. On the last day, the pupils brought offerings of pigs and chickens for the Guru. He sacrificed them and divided the meat into seven equal shares. But to his surprise Nandraj found that the number of shares had grown into eight. He called his disciples and said: 'Search the jungle around, for there must surely be a ghost or animal hiding near.' The search revealed the presence of the Maria and he was brought before the Guru.

"Nandraj then said to the Maria: 'Listen, every one here is a god and you are the only human being who has learned our magic. Unless you give an offering, as the gods have done, your son will die.' 'What offering should I give?' asked the Maria. 'In your house,' replied the Guru, 'there is a pigeon, offer that to me.' Now by the word 'pigeon' the Guru meant the Maria's only son and the reason

* Campbell, *Personal Narrative of Service among the Wild Tribes of Khondistan.*

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why he demanded him was that his knowledge could be imparted only to immortal beings who would use it in the proper way; but the Guru feared that now that a human being had discovered the secret, he would make use of the magic indiscriminately; there would be no deaths, pain would vanish and the gods will have no dead to people their kingdom. But if this human being were to eat a bit of the liver of his own son, there would be deaths in the world, and the Maria himself would have learned the secret of evil and death, and would become a magician.

"The Maria little knowing that when Nandraj Guru said 'pigeon' he meant his son, asked one of the gods to go to his house and fetch the bird. The god killed the boy, removed the liver and the Maria and the seven gods ate it together. As the Maria unwittingly ate the liver of his own son, he was filled with the knowledge of death and evil, and became the first sorcerer. Before he died he taught his disciples the art, and today many men know how to harm and kill their enemies; but in every case, the liver must be obtained, for the liver is the Jiva (soul) of all beings."*

* * *

The Meriah and other human sacrifices, not excluding Sati, were stopped by law during the British period; the spread of education, active propaganda and vigorous police measures put an end to human sacrifice as an organised institution by the end of the nineteenth century. But occasional cases did occur even after the institution had officially died. "During the dearth of 1886, in a temple of Kali, situated within 100 miles of the city of Calcutta, a boy was found, his neck cut, eyes staring open and the stiff clotted tongue thrust out between the teeth. . . . In another temple at Hugli, the head was left before the idol, decked with flowers." Again, "in 1871, a Muhammaden butcher losing his child was told by a Hindu conjuror that if he washed his wife in the blood of a boy his next infant would be healthy. To ensure this result, a child was murdered. A similar case occurred in Muzzafarnagar where a child was murdered and the blood drunk by a barren woman. . . . More recently three cases of murder of children, in order to obtain offspring, occurred in the Punjab in 1921, and in one of these a barren woman was bathed in child's blood."†

Even at present odd cases of such nature do happen. As late as April 1960, a person named Ranchore Kahandas, his wife Lailavati and a sorcerer-astrologer named Amritlal Joshi, were found guilty by the Bombay High Court of the sacrifice of a young girl to a local godling named Ambaji, and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for life. The prosecution case was that Ranchore and Lailavati had no children and consulted Joshi as to how to make Lailavati fertile and the sorcerer advised them to sacrifice an unmarried girl to Ambaji. Ranchore's mother was particularly anxious that her son should have a child, and she enticed her neighbour's young daughter who was sacrificed to Ambaji, Joshi officiating at the ceremony. The dead body of the girl was then put in an earthen jar and buried in a deserted house. This happened in 1957. In 1959, when the house was rebuilt, labourers digging at the site noticed the jar and its gruesome contents. Police was informed of the find, and enquiries led to the prosecution of the culprits. In the

* *Maria Murder and Suicide.*

† A list of such cases that occurred till 1940 has been given by Verrier Elwin in his book *Maria Murder and Suicide*, and the curious may refer to this work for further information on the subject.

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62. PROPITIATION OF SERPENTS
(*From* Jackson's *History of India*)

63. NAGA COUPLE
(Bengal, Pala Period. Indian Museum, Calcutta)

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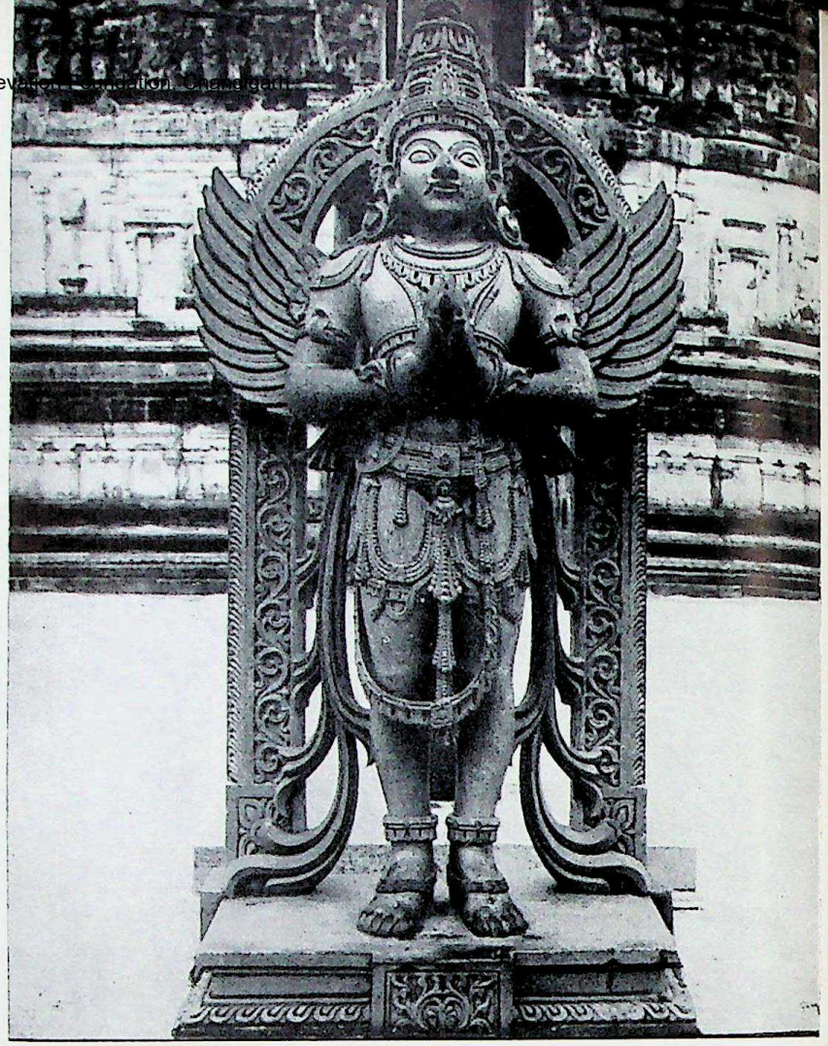

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64. VARAHA, THE BOAR INCARNATION OF VISHNU. He is invoked by Mantrins for destruction of enemies
(*From* Aihole. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

65. GARUDA, MAN-BIRD CHARGER OF VISHNU, THE MORTAL ENEMY OF SNAKES He is invoked in the preparation of all charms for cure of snake bites
(*From* Belur. *Photo*: S. C. Mehta)

66. GANESHA AS THE REMOVER OF OBSTACLES
(Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay)

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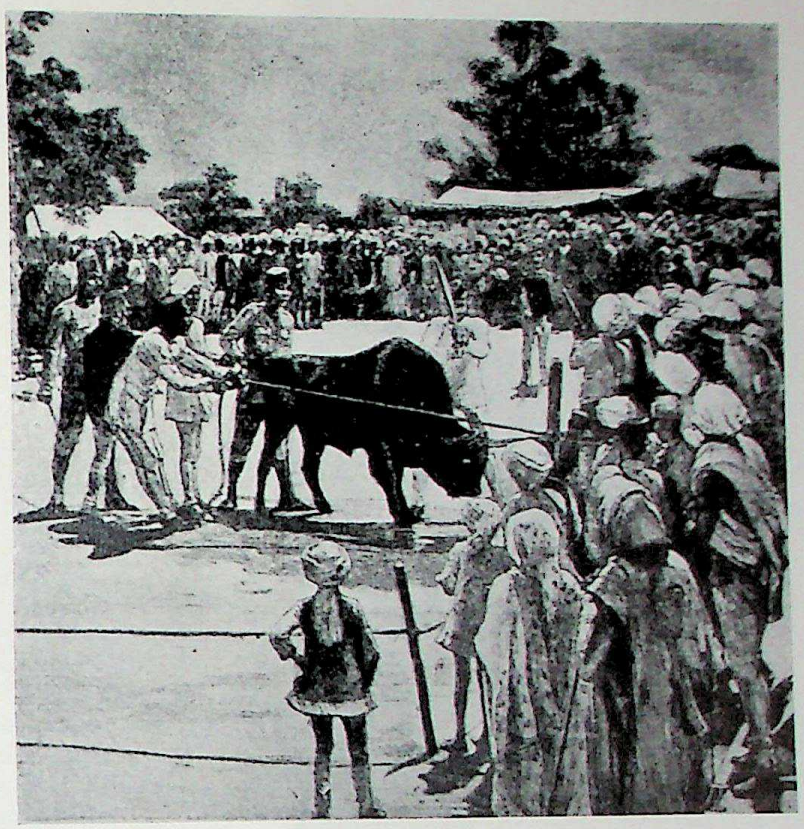

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67. THUGS
(*From* Urwick's *Indian Pictures*)

68. SACRIFICIAL BUFFALO
(*From* Hurst's *Indika*)

69. A GANG OF THUGS (actual photograph)
(*From* Butler's *The Land of the Veda*)

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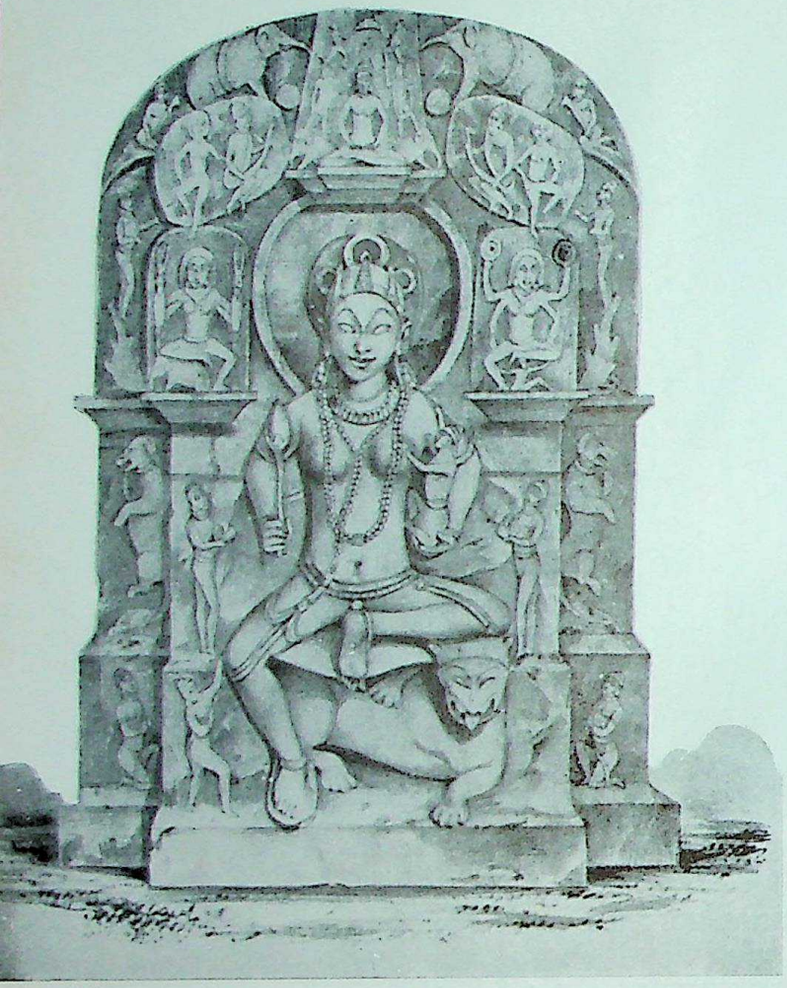

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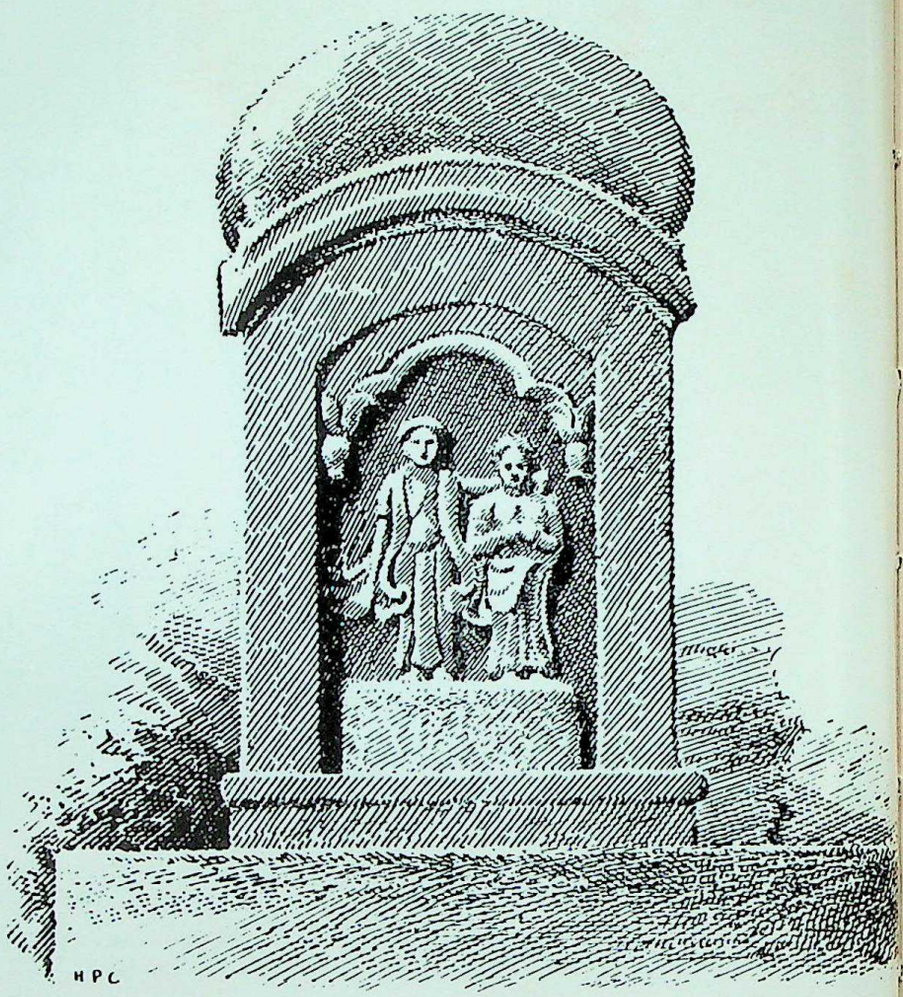

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70. BHAVANI IN A BENEVOLENT ASPECT
(After a Jain sculpture. *From* Coleman's *The Mythology of the Hindus*)

71. SUTTEE STONE
These stones were erected at the site of a Suttee, to commemorate the heroic and sanctified deed (*From* Havell's *Benares the Sacred City*)

72. ASVA-MEDHA OR HORSE SACRIFICE
Prior to the sacrifice, the horse wanders with army leaders following to fight any one who dares to stop the horse
(*From* Jackson's *History of India*)

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lower court they were acquitted, but the High Court found all the accused guilty of the charge. The old woman died while the case was proceeding.

Again, the following leaderette appeared in the *Times of India*, an influential Bombay daily, on 6-2-1961, under the heading Black Magic: "Though mob violence in every shape is to be unreservedly condemned, there are occasions when it is understandable, if not justifiable. The news from Kharagpur of a violent mob burning down an 'ashram' (place where holy men live), and roughly handling a 'sadhu' (holy man) is an instance in point. The fury of the mob was provoked by the discovery of the headless trunk of a little boy near the 'ashram'; and the mob not unnaturally believed that the poor child was the victim of blood sacrifice. One cannot condemn too strongly the wicked men who make a living by trading upon the credulity of the simple country folk. Going about as 'sadhus' some of them are in fact agents and abettors of hideous and pitiless crimes, deluding the ignorant into a belief that human sacrifice would procure them the protection, or avert the wrath, of terrible gods. The most pitiable part of this species of crime is that the victims are almost always innocent little children. The evil men who practise and propagate the so-called tantric rites and promote the cult of propitiating blood-thirsty deities with human blood are the enemies of both society and religion. No punishment can be too severe for black magicians who murder innocent children." (The explanations given in brackets are the author's.)

Kidnapping of children is a periodical menace in many parts of India, and some at least of these cases are inspired by a desire on the part of sorcerers or their agents to offer victims as thanksgiving to deities for favours received, for obtaining desired ends or for preparing magic concoctions.

ANIMAL SACRIFICES

Animal sacrifice, as we have seen, was the main feature of ritualistic religion in Vedic times, and elaborate instructions are laid down in the *Brahmanas* and *Srauta Sutras* on how to perform these sacrifices. The most celebrated of Indo-Aryan animal sacrifices was known as Asvamedha or horse sacrifice, performed by a monarch who claimed to be a Chakravartin or universal emperor. A king who wished to perform this sacrifice let loose the sacrificial horse, which had to conform to certain requirements as regards colour, appearance and mystic marks, and an army followed the horse; any ruler who obstructed the passage of the horse through his territories was considered an enemy who challenged the claim of the owner of the horse to world dominion, and had to be conquered in battle before the sacrifice could be performed. As a matter of fact, allies and friendly rulers usually allowed the horse a safe passage, more out of courtesy than as recognition of the lofty pretensions of the owner of the horse.

After the horse had been allowed to wander at will for a year, it was sacrificed in a grand ceremonial; along with the horse, thousands of other animals were sacrificed, and grand feasts were given to all castes; large sums were distributed to Brahmins and costly presents given to officiating priests whose number often ran into hundreds. The horse sacrifice usually took place after the conquest of some rich kingdom and the performer of the sacrifice was in a favourable position to spend large sums of money.

Hindu scriptures, especially the epics, give names of several emperors of ancient India who had performed this celebrated sacrifice, and contain romantic accounts

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of the straying of the horse into unknown regions and the adventures of the army in strange lands ruled by hostile monarchs.

Jains and Buddhists, as we have seen, preached against sacrificial religion and meat-eating, and due to their influence, most of the Brahmins became vegetarians in many parts of India such as Hindustan proper, the middle country and the South. Fa Hien who visited India towards the close of the fourth century of the Christian era, noticed that in most of the places he visited the higher castes were vegetarians, and butchers were drawn from the lower castes. Under the Imperial Guptas, it would appear an attempt was made to revive the ancient Vedic religion and Samudra Gupta (4th century A.D.) and his grandson Kumara Gupta are said to have performed the Asvamedha. But the doctrine of Ahimsa taught by the Buddha and Mahavira had taken root, and the Guptan attempt to revive sacrificial religion proved abortive. Sacrifices in public worship fell into disuse among Brahmins, and the added impetus given to Ahimsa and vegetarianism by the Vaishnavas put an effective stop to animal sacrifices in the exoteric rituals of the higher classes. Where animal sacrifice was deemed essential, as in royal festivals like Dussera connected with the warlike goddess Durga, the symbolic cutting of a Kalabash fruit in public was considered sufficient to obtain the merit of killing animals.

In the secret Tantric rites, however, Brahmins continued to perform animal sacrifices, and in the shrines of deities favoured of the lower orders, they condoned the killing of victims.

ANIMAL SACRIFICE IN TANTRIC RITES

Worship in Tantric cults consists of partaking of the Panchatatvas (see Chapter 9) or the five elements, namely, meat, liquor, fish, corn and sexual congress. The meat in the sacramental meal is to be of an animal sacrificed according to prescribed rites.

There are ten approved beasts that may be sacrificed for the purpose: deer, goat, sheep, buffalo, hog, porcupine, hare, iguana, tortoise and rhinoceros. The *Mahanirvana Tantra* lays down the following procedure for the sacrifice of animals:

"The sacrificer versed in the rules of sacrifice should select a beast free from disease and defect. Placing it before the image of Devi, he should sprinkle it with water from Vishesharghya (special offering) repeating the Bija Mantra, 'Phut'. The water, before sprinkling, should be converted into Amrita (nectar) by means of the Dhenu Mudra (the cow Mudra). Let him then worship the animal by repeating the Mantra: 'Namah! to (here mention the name of the animal, goat, sheep, etc.) which is a beast,' and offer it flowers, vermilion and water. He should now whisper into its ear the Pasu Gayatri, the Mantra that liberates an animal from its beast life and assures it a better rebirth. (The sacrifice is as much beneficial for the victim as for the sacrificer.) The Pasu Gayatri of Release is: 'Let us bring to mind the bonds of the life of a beast. Let us meditate upon the creator of the universe. May he liberate thee from this animal life.'

"Then, taking the Khadga (a heavy knife with a straight blade and an end curved like the crescent; the cutting is done with the blade) the excellent Sadhaka (performer) should worship it with the Bjia: 'Hung'. He should then meditate upon Vagisvari and Brahma at its end, Lakshmi and Narayana in the middle, and Uma and Mahesvara at the handle. Then repeat over the Khadga the Mantra: 'Namah! to the sacrificial knife infused with the presence of Brahma, Vishnu,

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Shiva and their Saktis'; he should now dedicate the victim with the Mahavakya with folded hands, repeating the text, 'May this dedication to thee be according to the ordained rites.'

"Having thus dedicated and offered the victim to the goddess, the animal should be placed on the ground (during the ceremony, the animal was first standing; during dedication it was held before the image, and it should be now left on the ground standing). The worshipper then with devotion to Devi, should sever the head of the beast with one sharp stroke of the Khadga. This may be done by the worshipper himself, by his brother's son, a friend or a kinsman, but never by one who is inimical.

"The blood when yet warm should be offered to the Vatukas (a group of deities). Then the head with a light on it (placed between the horns or ears) should be offered to Devi repeating the following Mantra: 'Kring! This head with the light upon it, I offer to Devi! Namah!' "*

In the ancient Vedic rituals, animals were generally strangled, but in Tantric rites they are decapitated in order to make the blood flow at the altar, which is one of the necessary conditions for propitiating the goddess. Tantric texts specifically mention that meat of animals thus sacrificed alone should be served in the secret Circle Worship, and such meat, it is stated, can be eaten by Brahmins on whom vegetarianism has been enjoined by the *Dharma Sastras* (Indo-Aryan law books) without the incurring of any sin.

ANIMAL SACRIFICES AMONG THE LOWER CASTES AND ABORIGINES

Whatever the restraints and secrecy observed in the sacrificial rituals of the higher castes, among the low castes and the aborigines, animal sacrifice formed one of the most important items of public worship. In Indo-Aryan shrines dedicated to Kali and other blood-thirsty manifestations of Devi as well as to certain ferocious forms of Shiva, the lower classes brought victims in large numbers during the main festivals of the deities, and Brahmins often superintended the ceremonies with approbation. Of such shrines, mention may be made of the famous temple of Kali at Kalighat, that of Durga in Benares, of Vindhyavasini at Mirzapur and of Bhavani at Kondapur and Tuljapur. In many shrines, however, public opinion and pressure from the State are tending to eliminate the more gruesome forms of animal sacrifice. For instance, in the temple of Kali at Cranganore, in the present Kerala State, during the annual feast known as Bharani thousands of pilgrims used to collect, each bringing a cock, and the birds were sacrificed in large numbers; but now, the cocks brought by the pilgrims are not allowed to be killed at the altar; so the pilgrims merely fly the cock in front of the goddess' altar and afterwards catch and kill it and eat the meat.

In certain parts of India, it is usual even now for a village to have a Jatra (fair) held for the prosperity of the community. These fairs are called Lakshmi Karyas or prosperity rites. The main item of the Jatra is the sacrifice of a buffalo. The buffalo is a favourite victim all over India, as it was in this form that the demon Mahisha is said to have attacked the goddess Durga, and was killed by her after a momentous struggle. On this account, the goddess in her warlike form is usually depicted as destroying a buffalo.

In the buffalo sacrifice, the old myth of the magical potency of the live heart

* Arthur Avalon, Translation.

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is linked to the legend of the destruction of Mahisha by Durga. "In the village of Khavlee, near Wai, in the Satara district, it is usual to take off the heart of the animal before it is decapitated. In other places, the blood of the animal sacrificed is sprinkled over the fields in the belief that such sprinkling produces fertility. In some places, the head of the animal is kept several days before the temple with a lamp burning on it. It is believed that the lamp burning on the severed head of the animal, if removed and buried, carries prosperity to the village of its burial; and accordingly attempts to remove such lamps stealthily are often made by inhabitants of neighbouring villages . . . . The Bhils, the Kolis, the Mahars and other aborigines are very particular about the performance of such sacrifices."*

When the British persuaded the Khonds to give up Meriah sacrifices, the Mootahs were permitted to substitute monkeys, goats and buffalos for human victims. In all cases, however, the flesh had to be cut from the live victim. The procedure was accompanied by considerable risk to the sacrificers and at times the victim and the sacrificer got mixed up; "in 1899, for instance, near Baliguda, in a Khond sacrifice of this kind, the buffalo killed the officiating priest."

* *Journal of the Anthropological Society of India.*

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6. *The Cult of the Skull and the Cremation Ground*

THE SEMITIC group of religions is generally inclined to put down what is pleasant and useful to God, and the unpleasant and the painful to the devil. This conception is not quite in keeping with the spirit of Hinduism; for though, for all practical purposes, the Hindus recognize the need for ethical standards in social life, yet a certain indifference to the idea of good and evil, "the dual throng," as Swami Vivekananda called it, has been characteristic of all Hindu forms of higher thought and of esoteric cults. The monistic conception of reality, which is at the root of all Hindu beliefs, is mainly responsible for this. The idea that ultimate reality is One and indivisible, that the bewildering multiplicity visible in the world is Maya or illusion, is ever present in the Hindu mind, and as such, the idea of good and evil, in fact ethical standard in general has to the Hindu but a relative and ephemeral value.

Now Maya itself is not different from Atman or reality, but is a projection or emanation of it, and as such Atman is the mainstay and cause of the universe, visible and mystic. Once we get convinced of this, it becomes difficult to put down to the devil what we do not happen to like. We have to take the world as it stands and not as we would like to have it. Hence the terrors of nature, death, decay and destruction, epidemics, cataclysms, storms and gales, floods and famines are all as much part of the deity or reality, as pleasant and benevolent phenomena. You cannot put down daylight to God and night to the devil. Such an attitude, the Hindu maintains, is essentially sentimental, subjective and irrational.

Ordinary men have an exaggerated notion of the sin of destruction. It is good to remember that Nature is the most wanton destroyer, compared to whose wholesale slaughter the destruction caused by the most wicked man is negligible. All the millions of men and women who tread the earth at present as if they are immortals, the millions and millions of living forms that eat, drink and make merry, the countless number of insects and worms, all have to perish in time; millions upon millions have already perished, and many more are drifting to this dire fate. The greatest solicitude for their welfare, all the pity and tears of the universe, whether of humans or of celestials, cannot save them. This world itself will perish, and systems of worlds perish in time one after another. All are doomed to death and dissolution. Life preys upon life, the stronger on the weak, the former itself doomed to perish at the hands of all-devouring Time.

The words of the Gita are important in this connection. Dismayed at the thought of destroying the enemy hosts arrayed against him and the consequent incurring of the sin of homicide, Arjuna stands paralysed when Krishna, as the deity, thus allays his fears:

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"Death am I, and my present task
Destruction. View in me
The active slayer of these men;
For though you fail and flee,
These captains of the hostile hosts
Shall die, shall cease to be.
They are already slain by me;
Be thou the instrument."*

So, decay and death are as much part of godhead as birth and growth. In fact, the latter two are not possible without the former. For as night follows day, death follows birth. Worlds, as we have seen in the first chapter, come into being during the Day of Brahma and perish in the Evening, and Chaos is of equal duration as cosmic order.

Now certain sections of Hindus hold the view that Chaos represents reality in a better way than order. For while we live in this orderly world of ours, life is beset with death, pain and sorrow and he who realises this is half emancipated. The Maha Pralaya or the Greater Chaos that destroys the worlds, gods, demons, and even Brahma the creator, is said to represent reality best, and the demented dance of Shiva, the destroyer, or of Kali, his spouse, who has devoured Time itself, represents the Maha Pralaya.

The proper atmosphere for worshipping or meditating upon this aspect of reality is not, obviously, that of the temple or of cells in monasteries, but the cremation ground where humanity lies prostrate, where skulls and bones of burnt bodies lie scattered, where the high and the low lie in equal frustration, a prey to the prowling jackal and the night-bird.

Now all cannot conceive Pralaya in the abstract and for the benefit of the ordinary run of mankind, the terror-inspiring phenomena in nature like storms, floods, earthquakes, etc., are held up as representing cosmic dissolution and their worship is recommended. When these are not available for worship, the skull and the cremation ground serve as a standing symbol of Pralaya. The presiding deities of the skull cult are Shiva and his spouse Kali, often depicted in demented aspects signifying the confusion that is Chaos and indulging in frenzied dances with their ill-assorted collection of blood-thirsty, corpse-eating army of weird imps.

The cremation ground has yet another meaning; it signifies that ideal in which man attempts to put an end to all desires and attachments that bind him to his earthly moorings, and to find the liberation or emancipation of the sage from the thirst for life. This symbolism of the cremation ground and the philosophic background for the worship of Kali as the goddess of terror are aptly illustrated in the following hymns to Kali composed by Swami Vivekananda:

Beyond the ken of human speech and mind,
It dwells in weal and woe; *It's* that which comes
As the all-powerful destroyer
Kali, and as the kindliest mother.

To Kali, a hymn:
The stars are blotted out,
The clouds are covering clouds,

* Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial.*

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It is darkness vibrant, sonant,
In the roaring whirling wind
Are the souls of a million lunatics—
Let loose from the prison house—
Wrenching trees by the roots,
Sweeping all the path.
The sea has joined the fray
And swirls up mountain waves,
To reach the pitchy sky,
The flash of lurid light
Reveals on every side,
A thousand, thousand shades
Of death begrimmed and black—
Scattering plagues and sorrows—
Dancing mad with joy,
Come, Mother, come!

For terror is thy name
Death is thy breath,
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for ever
Thou Time, the All-Destroyer!
Come, O Mother, come!

Who dares misery love,
And hugs the form of death,
Dances destruction's dance,
To him the Mother comes.

Again,

Lo! How are all scared by the Terrific,
None seek Elokeshi* whose form is death,
The deadly frightful sword, reeking with blood,
They take from her hand, and put a lute instead!
Thou dreaded Kali, the All-destroyer,
Thou alone art true; thy shadow's shadow
Is indeed the pleasant Vanamali (Krishna).
O Terrible Mother, cut quick the core,
Illusion dispel—the dream of happiness,
Rend asunder the fondness of the flesh.

True, they garland thee with scalps, but shrink back
In fright, and call thee, "O All-Merciful"!
At thy thunder peal of awful laughter,
At thy nudeness—for space is thy garment—
Their hearts sink down with terror, but they say
"It is the demons that the Mother kills"!
They only pretend they wish to see thee,

* One with dishevelled hair, a name of Kali.

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But when the time comes, at thy sight, they flee.
Thou art death! To each and all in the world
Thou distributest the plague and disease—
Vessels of venom filled by thine own hands.

O thou insane! Thou but cheatest thyself;
Thou dost not turn thy head lest thou behold,
Aye, the form terrible of the Mother!
Thou courtest hardship hoping happiness,
Thou wearest cloak of Bhakti and worship
With mind full of achieving selfish ends.
The blood from the severed head of a kid
Fills thee with fear—thy heart throbs at the sight—
Verily a coward! Compassionate?
Bless my soul! A strange state of things indeed!
To whom shall I tell the truth? Who will see?

Free thyself from the mighty attraction—
The maddening wine of love, the charm of sex.
Break the harp! Forward with the ocean's cry!
Drink tears, pledge ev'n life—let the body fall!
Awake, O hero! Shake off thy vain dreams,
Death stands at thy head—does fear become thee?
A load of misery, true though it is—
This becoming—know this* to be thy God.
His temple—the Shmasan† among corpses
And funeral pyres; unending battle—
That verily is his sacred worship;
Constant defeat—let that not unnerve thee;
Shattered be little self, hope, name and fame;
Set up a pyre of them, make thy heart a burning ground,
And let Shyama (the dark one, Kali), dance there.‡

THE KAPALIKAS AND THE AGHORIS

The advocates of the skull-cult are known as Kapalikas or wearers of skulls. They are now a dying sect in India, but once were quite powerful, commanding the allegiance of many kings. They seem to have been the most powerful secret sect in India during the decay of Buddhism in the country. While the philosopher Sankara was propagating Advaita doctrines in India, a Kapalika, we are told, begged of him his head as he, Sankara, had no use for this appendage since a man and his head were part of Maya and had no independent reality.

The priests of the Kapalika sect used to wear skulls on their persons and had skulls for drinking bowls. These ornaments and utensils were usually of the heads of victims sacrificed before Kali. For the Kapalikas were inveterate sacrificers of human victims and on this account they were dreaded by other sects of Hindus, especially

* This becoming or wheel of constant birth and death.
† Cremation ground.
‡ *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashramam), Calcutta.

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73

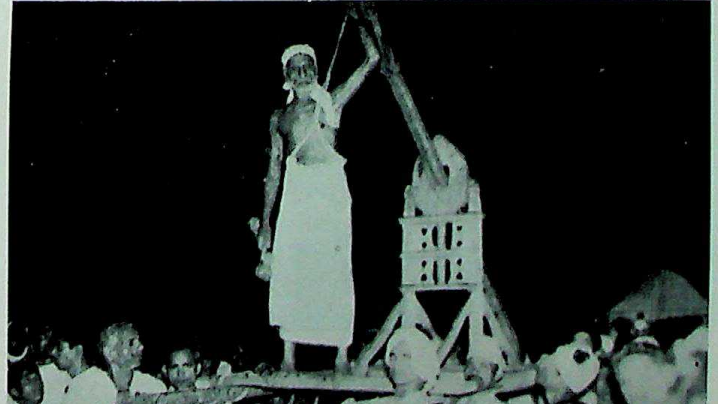
73. COMMUNITY HOOK-SWINGING
(*Photo*: M. P. Poulos)

74

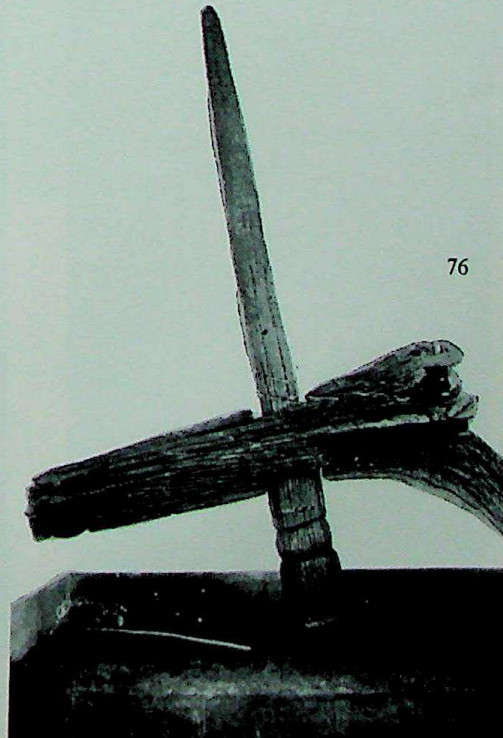
74. SUTTEE (SATI)
(*From* Bernier's *Travels*. 18th century)

75. HOOK-SWINGING, SOLO
(*Photo*: M. P. Poulos)

76. STUMP OF MERIAH HUMAN SACRIFICIAL POST PRESERVED IN MADRAS MUSEUM
Meriah human sacrifices were stopped by law in the 19th century



75



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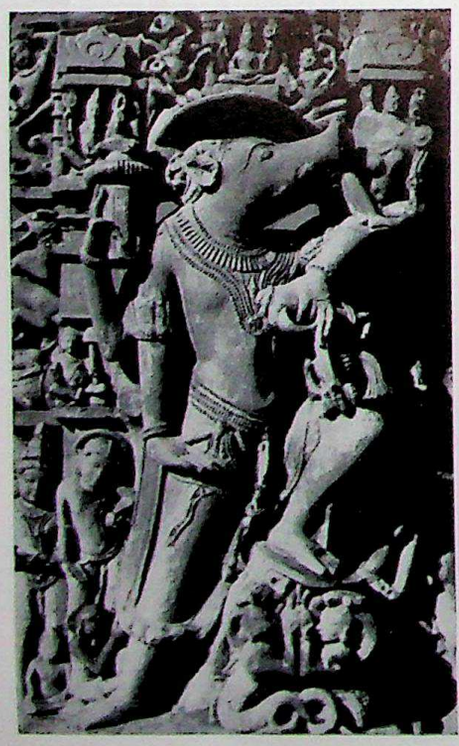

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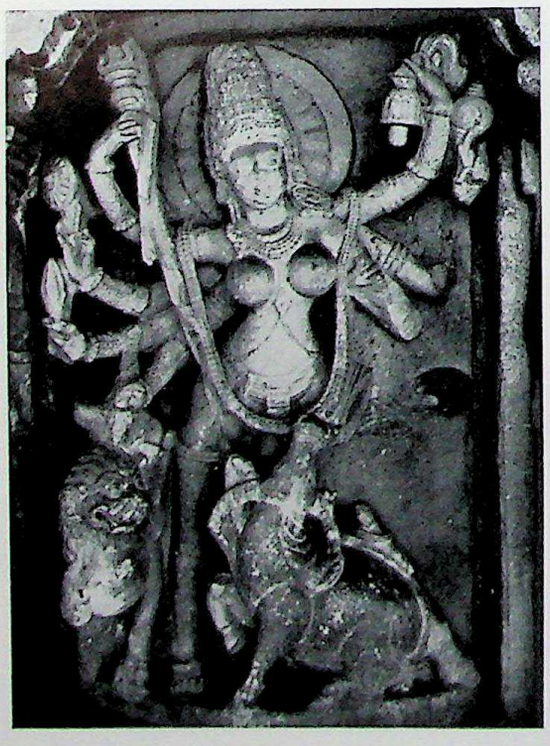

79

77. A VIGOROUS FIGHT BETWEEN NARASIMHA, MAN-LION INCARNATION OF VISHNU, AND A DEMON
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

78. BOAR INCARNATION OF VISHNU
This terror aspect of Vishnu is often invoked by sorcerers
(*From* Khajuraho. *Photo*: Darshan Lall)

79. DURGA'S EPIC BATTLE WITH THE BUFFALO DEMON
(*From* Aihole. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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80. SCULPTURES OF KALI IN THE HALL OF SACRIFICES, ELLORA
(*Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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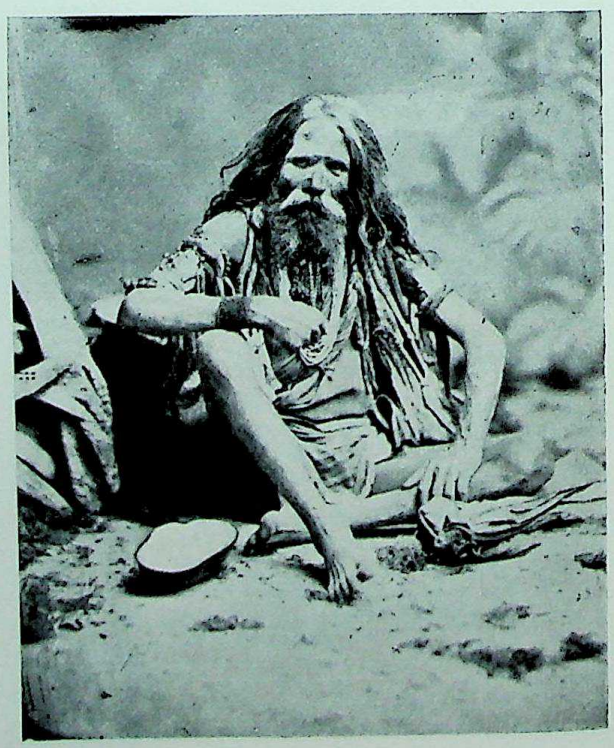
81

81. CHITIPATI, A BUDDHIST TANTRIC DEITY FROM LADAK



82

82. A SADHU OR WANDERING MENDICANT

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during the heyday of their power when they sacrificed their enemies to the deity.

Another belief of the Kapalikas was that a devotee could transform himself into the deity through liquor and indiscriminate indulgence in sex, and many kings who followed this cult seldom troubled themselves with the affairs of state but gave themselves up to the mysterious cult of transforming themselves into deities. Some of the medieval temples of India depicting unrestrained sex activities are believed to be relics of the Kapalika cult. The doctrines had spread to Indian colonies of Khmer and Java, where kings were believed to be gods, and their statues were sculptured as Shiva.*

Anyway, the Kapalikas lost their power mainly through the rise of Vaishnavite doctrines and are, at present, all but extinct. Some of their practices have survived in the Tantric cults (see Chapter 9) in which the Mahapatra or skull is used as a drinking bowl and communal Maithuna forms part of ritualistic worship.

While the Kapalikas specialised in the skull-cult, the Aghoris were partial to the cremation ground. While emphasizing the supremacy of death, they were not so active as the Kapalikas in the matter of destroying or sacrificing humans. Their main item of worship was ritualistic cannibalism. They did not care to sacrifice humans, but were content to obtain dead bodies for their sacramental dinner.

The Aghori, like the Kapalika, is a dying sect. The doctrines and practices of Aghoris are guarded secrets; they possess no texts and scriptures, and their traditions are transmitted from Guru to disciple by word of mouth. The Tantric texts, with their general approval of all exotic cults, mention the *Aghora Achara* as one of the seven stages by which a devotee obtains liberation.

Aghora means the negation of Ghora or Terrible, a name usually applied to Sansara or life by the pessimistic schools of Indian religions. As such the Aghori claims to have passed over to or reached the other shore of the Ghora Samsara Sagara (Terrible Ocean of Life); the proof of this emancipation consists mainly in an indifference to social standards in general and to food in particular; for it is one of the avowed doctrines of the Aghoris that the ability to eat loathsome things best demonstrates the sense of liberation from earthly bonds. Accordingly, the Aghoris specialise in eating filth, carrion and anything revolting to common taste. Horse meat, however, is taboo to the sect because of Hayagriva, the horse-headed form of Vishnu, worshipped by them.

The noviciate to the Aghori cult is said to last twelve years. At the time of initiation, after this long period of training, the head of the novice is washed in urine and shaved and he is given his first sacramental meal.

The Aghoris, unlike the Kapalikas, have never had political ambitions, and have not courted royalty for the spread of their faith. They were content to practise their religion in secret and in isolated groups, living mainly in the neighbourhood of cremation grounds. Though much reduced in number, they are a living sect, and as late as 1931 there was a police case against two of them who were caught eating a corpse exhumed from a grave. I myself knew a gentleman, well placed among the staff of a British firm, who once fell among Aghoris and escaped from them; soon after passing out of school, he took, due to unemployment, to the life of a wandering mendicant and joined a company of three Sadhus; one night while he was supposed to be asleep but actually awake, he happened to see the Sadhus eating a sacramental meal of carrion and this cooled his ardour for the religious life; he left the gang, looked for a job and was employed by the firm.

* For details of the cult of god-kings in South-East Asia, see the author's work, *The Story of the Cultural Empire of India.*

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PART TWO

SEX CULTS

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7. Sex-Worship in General

SEX AS conceived in Hindu mysticism has three aspects: the Passive, the Dynamic and the Emotional. The phenomenal world is said to be born of the union of the inert Male Principle and his Sakti or Energy. Before the union took place, there was Kama or Desire.

A peculiarity of Hindu mystic conceptions is that the static is always conceived as male and the dynamic as female. Shiva without his Sakti or spouse is said to be Shava or corpse, yet this static Shava is the mainstay or core of all dynamics. As there is a static point in the centre of the axis of a rotating wheel, without which the wheel cannot move, the male principle inspires all movements while remaining unaffected by the motion. The core is of the wheel, though not sharing its motion; similarly both the static and dynamic principles are of the same reality though appearing contradictory.

These two principles are unemotional, merely representing the forces of becoming or regeneration which, in itself, is a-moral. What relates the two is Kama or desire and this emotional principle appears in the world as sex love.

The static male principle is represented in sex cults as the Lingam or the phallus, the female principle as Yoni or the genital of a woman, and the emotional principle as the sex love that unites the two.

These highly idealistic conceptions supply the philosophic background for sex-worship in India which manifests itself in different forms among the various castes, sects and tribes. Among certain aborigines and lower castes, it assumes crude forms such as fertility rites with their attendant vulgar and obscene practices while, among others, it takes the form of sacramental Maithuna or sexual union, and still others, transcendental mysticism.

Even advanced forms of Indian sex cults have their roots in antiquity, in those mysterious cults of pre-Aryan religions of India and the Mesopotamian world. We have good reason to believe that the earliest known Indian civilisation, the Indus Valley Culture as it is called, was co-eval with the ancient civilisations of the Middle East, with which it had cultural and commercial contacts. Further, as we shall see presently, the Indo-Aryans were, in the beginning, averse to sex-worship and had incorporated it in their religion due to pressure from either the indigenous peoples of India or alien races who conquered them. As such, to appreciate the background that gave rise to sex cults in India, it is necessary for us to have some idea of similar practices that were prevalent in ancient religions farther West.

SEX-WORSHIP IN ARCHAIC RELIGIONS

The importance of sex in life is quite obvious to all intelligent human beings,

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however much inhibitions may have shrouded it in mystery. We are all born of the sex act, and most of our activities, if not all, are directly or indirectly motivated by sex—love, marriage, children, domestic happiness; in fact, most of the important things an ordinary human being lives for are based on sex. There are psychologists, as is well known, who maintain that all teleological activity is inspired by sex, either in pursuit of its pleasures or in attempts to escape from it through fear, disappointment or perversity. Both the voluptuary and the ascetic, it would appear, are in the grip of the same force. Be that as it may, he who takes a legitimate interest in the pleasures of life must of necessity recognize the power and all-pervading influence of sex and it is difficult for him to be indifferent to it.

Sex-worship in some form or other is fairly common to all primitive cultures, but certain stages in social progress mark its development in ritualistic forms. For instance, there was a time in the evolution of primitive cultures, when men were ignorant of paternity; that is, they did not know that sexual intercourse was responsible for conception in women who were thought to bear children when they came of age, as trees bear fruit in their time. Love-making and sex activities there were, to be sure, but no one knew that these were responsible for pregnancy and child-birth. There were such primitive communities existent in remote parts of Africa and in Polynesia till recently missionaries or European anthropologists enlightened them on the function of copulation in reproduction.

In such primitive communities, the mystery and awe the phenomenon of birth inspired led to the deification of those mysterious parts of a woman's anatomy that brought forth living beings into the world. And then a great biologist of the primitive world discovered the true cause of pregnancy in women. This momentous discovery led to a revolutionary change in morals and in religion. The male organ which was hitherto considered an article of pleasure, a toy so to say, assumed a new meaning and a tremendous significance, as it was found to possess mysterious creative powers. In addition to the shades of ancestors and spirits that constituted the pantheon of primitives, man himself possessed a powerful creator in visible form. "Observing the creative power of his generative organ, seeing there the means of bringing forth beings like himself, with faculties of reasoning and thought, and religious conception, what wonder that he should render to it direct adoration or regard it as the type of the unknown omnipotent author of all things, his own and the world's creator?"*

Originally it would appear, the adoration was direct, inspired by the mysterious potency discovered in the phallus. But as religion developed, rituals and ceremonies in honour of generative principles were instituted and grand shrines erected; feasts and festivals were held in which the activities indicated by the functions of the phallus played a prominent role. In ancient Greece and Rome, the presiding deity of the cult was Priapus, son of Bacchus and Venus. Under the curse of jealous Juno he was born with a phallus out of all proportion to his size and Venus, repulsed by the sight of her monstrous son, sent him away to Lampsacus, ostensibly for education. In this place Priapus' education does not seem to have been confined to the arts, and he became a social menace and the dread of all husbands, and the citizens exiled him. On this, we are told, the town was visited by a devastating plague and the exiled debauchee was recalled and deified.

Priapus means "fecundation of Apis" which would indicate his Egyptian origin, since Apis was the bull-god of Egypt. Phallic symbols were also known in

* *Crux Anasata* (Anon.)

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Rome as "Tutunus, Mutinus and Fascinum." Priapus received the last epithet as images or drawings of his member were widely used for averting the evil eye which was known in Rome as *fascinatio*. "These were also worn by barren women in the belief that it would conduce to fruitfulness."

"The figures of this god varied somewhat in character, though the meaning was always the same . . . . One will be seen with the head of a fawn, another with a human head and a phallus. Sometimes the god is represented with a reaping hook in one hand, while the other grasped the organ which was invariably depicted as of an enormous size and displaying intense energy. Women could be seen publicly approaching the god and hanging upon the gigantic phallus garlands representing their lovers; nay, further, St. Augustine declares that Roman ladies thought it perfectly decorous and even pious for the young brides to seat themselves upon the monstrous and obscene Priapus."

Again, "at the festival of Venus, the Roman matrons adored the consecrated emblem in the temple on the Quirinal, and bore it thence with great pomp to the sanctuary of Venus Erycina outside the Colline gate where it was presented to the statue of the goddess and then returned to the former place. In the Spring, the Roman rustics carried the phallus across the fields to ensure their fertility. St. Augustine mentions that in Rome the orgies connected with phallus worship were at times carried to such extremes that they had to be suppressed by authorities."*

Further, "as actual exposure of the external genitalia was not always possible, its image or symbol was carried generally in the form of an amulet. Actually, symbols of the male organs were more common as the Greeks attributed greater virility to the male and hence a representation of the male organs was considered to be more powerful against the 'evil eye' than that of the female genitalia. Due to this belief, plastic representations of the phallus, often of huge size and bearing wings and claws were to be found everywhere—on gates, in public places, on articles of daily use like rings, lamps, dress ornaments, sticks, drinking vessels, etc."†

Greece and Rome had borrowed many things from Egypt, which country they considered the mother of civilisation, and the cult of Priapus was one of the innovations introduced from Egypt to Greece and from here to Rome. In Egypt the phallic cult was inextricably linked with the dogma of resurrection, and phallic emblems were generally carved on the coffins of mummies. The Egyptian phallic god was Khem and in the festival connected with his cult, the devotees, according to Herodotus, "fabricated certain obscene images, about a cubit in height, so artificially contrived with nerves that the pudenda, equal in magnitude to the rest of the body, might be removed at pleasure, and these images the women carried about in procession singing all the time the praise of the god and dancing to the sound of flute."

Egyptian phallic lore attributes the origin of the worship to goddess Isis. Osiris, husband of Isis, it is related, was murdered by his brother Seth who enclosed the body in a coffin and let it drift down the Nile; Isis went in search of the body and found it on the seashore; after hiding it in a safe place she returned to her palace to see how her son Horus was faring. In the meantime Seth, after the murder of his brother, had gone on a hunting expedition, and chance took him to the coffin of Osiris. In order to leave no trace of his crime, Seth cut the

* *Crux Anasata.*

† R. J. Mehta, *Scientific Curiosities of Love-Life and Marriage.*

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body into pieces and scattered them to the winds. Isis came to know of this and she went in search of the pieces and, after epic adventures, managed to reclaim all parts of her husband's body except the genitals. On this she had a wooden phallus made in place of the missing member and instituted its worship among her people.

While Greece and Rome are believed to have imported phallic worship from Egypt, this country itself seems to have received it from Syria. "In Syria may be the genuine origin of both Indian and Egyptian phallic worship." The Mesopotamian regions generally were considered the ancient home of the cult and the cities here vied with one another in erecting huge towers as representations of the phallus, the religious merit accrued therefrom being considered proportionate to the size of the monument. The Jews considered these monuments as abominations, and the Tower of Babel was such a phallic structure.

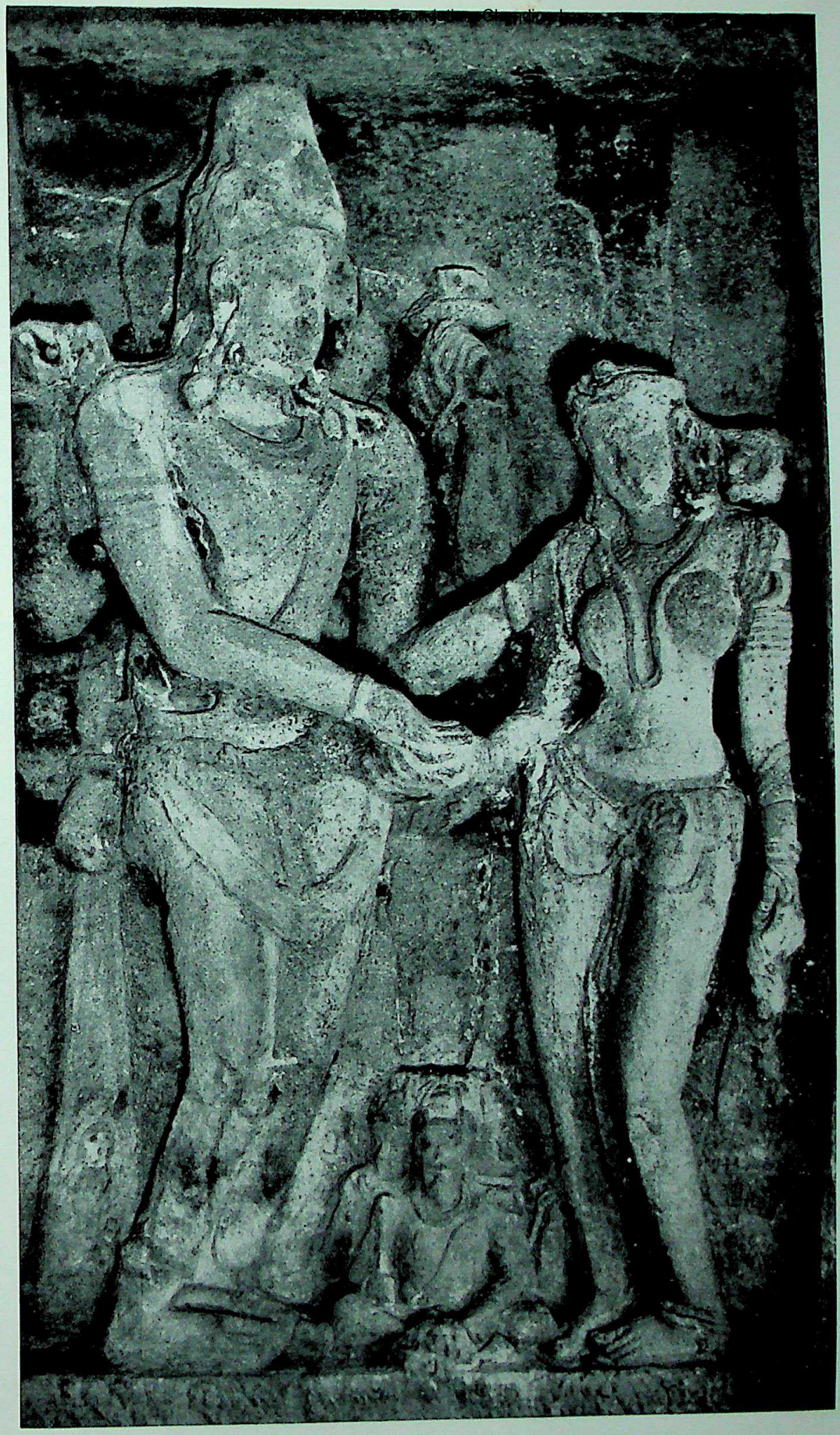
Lucian informs us that "the grandest and most solemn feast observed by ancient Syrians was known as 'the Funeral Pile' or 'the Torch.' It was celebrated at Hierapolis at the commencement of the Vernal season and the sacrifices were of the most extravagant description. Everything was on a scale of the grandest magnitude and splendour, multitudes flocking from all parts of adjacent countries bringing their gods with them to heighten the grandeur of the festival. The most remarkable feature of the proceedings, however, was that after the priests had been flogging and slashing each other with knives some of them sacrificed to their protectress not the symbolical but the real phallus. A young man would be seized with a sudden fury, would tear his clothes from the back, leap amidst the assembled priests, snatch up a short sword that had probably been kept there for the purpose, castrate himself, run with what he had cut off round the city, go into whatever house fancy took him to throw it, for which he was provided with a complete suit of a woman's apparel, and all the ornaments becoming a lady.

"This practice can only be accounted for either by that ancient maxim of superstition that whatever is most sacredly precious to mankind should be consecrated to the gods, and that we please them most when we make the most costly sacrifice (supposing that, in the perpetration of an act so abhorrent to nature, they intended to give public proof of a vow of perpetual virginity) or on account of a particular mythological reason."*

Closely allied to phallic worship was the mystery cults of Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome, in which sex rites were mainly responsible for their practice in secret. Here too, the Babylonian goddess of fertility Mylitta, with her many aspects and names (like those of Durga in India), was the fountain-head from which the cults spread to the Mediterranean region and possibly to India.

The mystery cults of the Mediterranean region were guarded secrets to reveal which was a crime punishable by death or exile, especially if the person divulging the secret was an initiate who had partaken of the mysteries. Hence, Herodotus' reticence in dealing with these mysteries in his history, and his anxiety to pass over references to the cult by merely mentioning that "it belongs to the mysteries." The philosopher Diagoras who spoke against the mysteries saved himself by flight (429 B.C.) and the "Athenians set the price of a talent upon his head." Aristotle's exile, though attributed to political reasons, is suspected to be in connection with the divulging of or writing lightly on the mysteries. "The initiate," he wrote discreetly, "do not so much learn anything as feel certain emotions, and are put into a certain frame of mind." He could not possibly say more. Aeschylus was

* *Crux Anasata.*



83. PARVATI AND SHIVA AS BRIDE AND BRIDE-GROOM
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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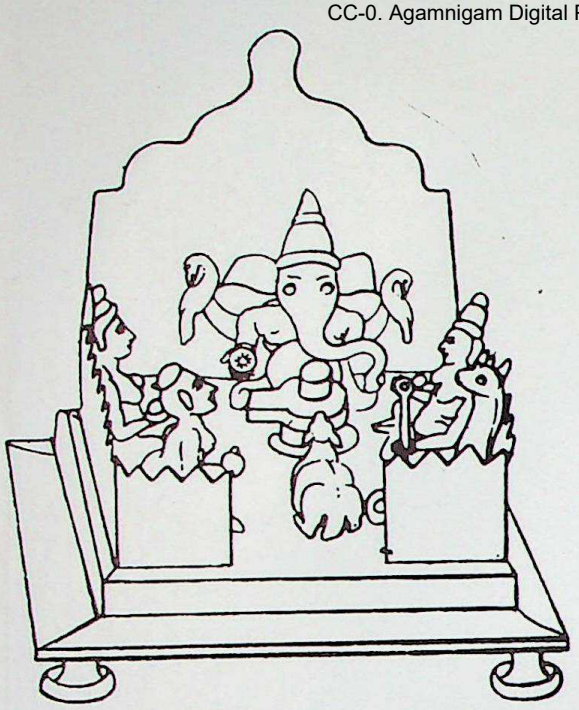

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84. THE LINGAM
(*From* Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*)

85. MARRIAGE OF SHIVA AND PARVATI
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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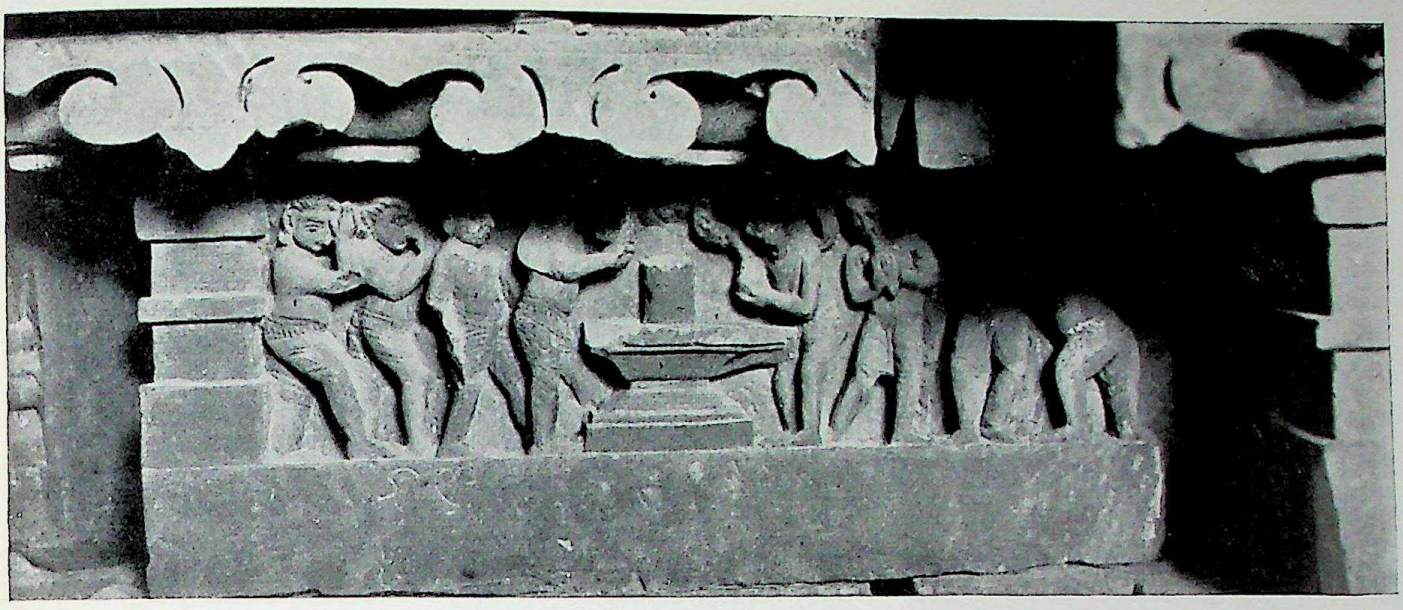

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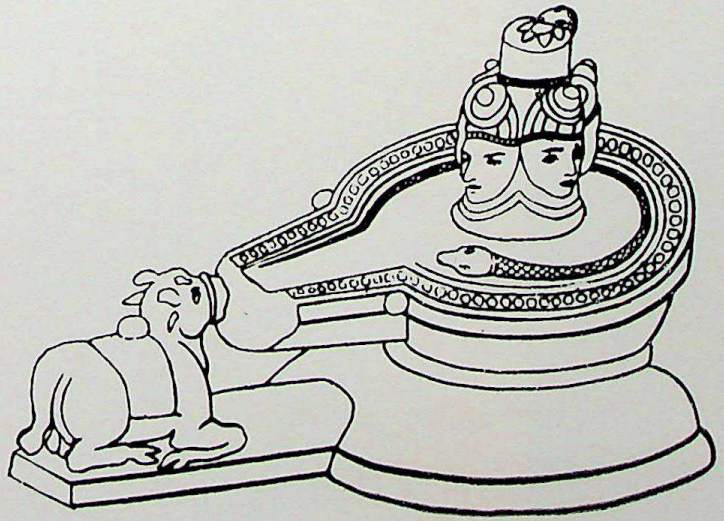
86. WORSHIP OF THE LINGAM
(*From* Khajuraho. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

87. LINGAM WITH NANDI
(*From* Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*)



88. LINGAM
(*From* Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*)

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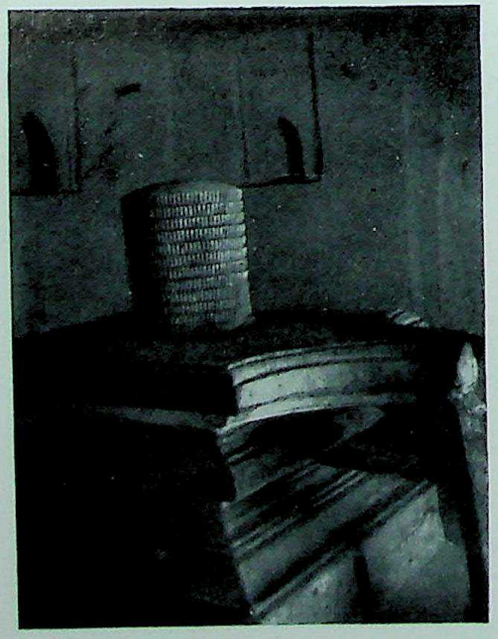
89. RATI GODDESS OF PLEASURE AND WIFE OF LOVE-GOD KAMA
(*From* Vellore. *Photo*: E. S. Mahalingam)

90. LINGAM WITH 1100 RUDRAS CARVED ON IT
(*From* Khajuraho. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

91. A LINGAYAT. HE WEARS THE LINGAM ON THE ARM
(*From* Thurston's *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*)



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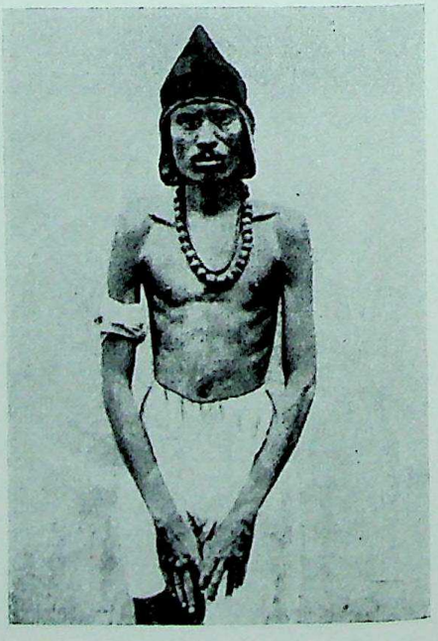

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accused of profaning the mysteries by his loose talk but escaped punishment on the ground that his information was second-hand and unreliable, as he himself was not initiated into the mysteries.

The early Christians with their burning zeal for rooting out all kinds of abominations from the world, condemned the mysteries in no uncertain language. They were filled with the spirit of the martyrs and were prepared to suffer death for their convictions; hence the writings of the Fathers of the Church are our main source of information on the mystery cults of Greece, Rome and Egypt. Clement of Alexandria (3rd century A.D.) refers to some of the mysteries prevalent in his time in which sex-worship formed the main ritual. In the Eleusian mysteries, we are told, the priestess had to raise her tunic and "show in full view, the lower part of the body which women conceal." Again, "I must unveil the sacred objects they enclose and reveal the secret; cakes of sesame and wheat flour, bannocks and biscuits with many protuberances on their surfaces, lumps of salt and a serpent; and that is the stock in trade of Dionysus and Bassarus; is not that all? The list resembles that of the mysterious symbols of Themis (considered as presiding over the Thesmophoria), a sprig of majoram, a lamp, a knife and above all, a comb which is as much to say in euphemistic and mystical language, the sexual parts of a woman."*

The concluding ceremony of these mysteries usually ended, as in the Indian Tantric cult, in Maithuna, either symbolically or in actual fact. The Maithuna took place between the hierophant and the priestess, and this part of the ceremony was made the target of virulent attack by its opponents. "Do not the Athenians and all Greece," asks a bitter critic, "flock together to celebrate these vain ceremonies? Is it not in them that one finds that darkened haunt where that intercourse of such good repute takes place between the hierophant and the priestess, the twain being quite alone? Are not all the torches extinguished there while an innumerable crowd of the initiated stands awaiting salvation from what is being done in the dark by the two persons?"†

Since the originators of and participants in the mysteries have left us no accounts of the ritual, and as its descriptions come from its enemies, we have, obviously got only a one-sided view of the cult. But there are certain things to be noted about these so-called orgiac rituals; for one thing, only women were initiated into some of the mysteries in which sex-worship predominated; for another, both the priestess and the hierophant, in mysteries which culminated in Maithuna, had to be rendered sexually impotent by the administration of hemlock before the symbolic union took place.

SEX CULTS IN INDIA

Hinduism was co-eval with the ancient religions of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece, but while in these regions sex-worship was actively suppressed by Islam and Christianity, in India, the Indo-Aryans, though they showed some antagonism to sex-worship in the initial stages of their contact with people who practised it, eventually recognized it, and not only incorporated it in their religious system but actively encouraged it; and sex-worship in India has come down to us in the three main forms already noticed.

* *Crux Anasata.*

† Ibid.

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In India there are, however, certain peculiarities connected with sex-worship not prevalent in the Mediterranean cults. The Indian cult of the Lingam is happily free from the orgies that characterised phallic worship among the Mediterranean peoples. The shape of the Lingam is not objectionable or indecent, and the ladies who daily adore it hardly recognize in it the phallus. To the morally delicate the Lingam is pointed out as a representation of the "formless deity"; its worship is strictly moral and decorous, the symbol being contemplated as Shiva in his static form. In fact, the most Puritanic of the Hindu sects, as we shall see in the next chapter, are the Lingayats who worship the Lingam to the exclusion of all other deities.

Another important feature of Hindu sex-worship is the prominence given to the female principle in its more mysterious rituals. Though the Yoni as such is not publicly worshipped like the Lingam, except in combination with the latter, the female principle and its emblem occupy an important place in the Sakti cult. In the phallic cults of ancient civilisations, again, the phallus appears as the active principle, but in India, it is the Yoni that is active and not the Lingam. The idea is no doubt linked with the Sankhya philosophy in which the Purusha or the male is conceived as passive and Prakriti, the female, as dynamic. In the Advaita philosophy too, the Atman is conceived as Nirguna or without attributes while the attendant Maya is active and feminine.

The conception of sex as god is also responsible for the religious art of some of the temples which depict Maithuna figures in various postures of love-making. This art should be viewed from the background of those conceptions in which sex appeared to its devotees not only as a natural function but the tangible expression of those mysterious forces of creation that operate in the universe.

As in art, so in literature. In Hindu scriptures sex is discussed with a frankness which often revolts the European with his inhibited horror of its carnality; "a singularity," observes Sir William Jones, "which pervades all their writings and conversation, but which is no proof of depravity in their morals." The idea of the dual nature of reality is, for instance, thus frankly set forth in the *Mahabharata*, a scripture read in all Hindu homes: "He whose Lingam Brahma, Vishnu and Indra worship is the most eminent. Since children bear not the mark of the lotus of Brahma but are marked with the male and female organs—therefore offspring is derived from Mahesvara. All women produced from the nature of Devi as their cause are marked with the Yoni and all males are manifestly marked with the Lingam of Hara. He who asserts any other cause than Isvara (Shiva) or (affirms) that there is any female not marked by Devi in the three worlds, including all things movable and immovable, let that fool be thrust out. Know everything that is male to be Isvara and everything that is female to be Vema (a name of Shiva's spouse), for this world, movable and immovable, is pervaded by these two bodies."

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8. Cult of the Lingam

THE PHALLIC cult, it would appear, was prevalent in India from the time of her earliest known civilisation; emblems looking like the Lingam and Yoni have been discovered in the remains of the ancient cities of the Indus Valley and it is highly probable that the Indus Valley Culture, about 5,000 years old, lived in intimate contact with the religions of ancient Mesopotamia. But we know little about the way of life and the mode of worship of the Indus Valley people, and it will be presumptuous to draw definite conclusions on the subject in our present state of knowledge.

All the same, it is clear from the literature of the Indo-Aryans that the cult was prevalent in India at the time of the Aryan invasion, which took place before the beginning of the first millennium B.C. For early Vedic literature speaks, with considerable hostility and contempt, of a people whose god was the Shishna (*membrum virile*). Later, however, when the Indo-Aryans absorbed the beliefs and practices of the indigenous peoples and built up the vast socio-religious synthesis known as Puranic Hinduism, phallic worship was recognized by them, and in course of time it was identified with the worship of Shiva, the most important deity of the Puranic pantheon. And Shiva, the destroyer, was endowed with the functions of regeneration as well.

After its worship was incorporated into Hinduism, the Lingam became the most popular symbol of Shiva. Not only in India but in all countries to which she sent out colonists and transplanted Hindu culture, the cult of the Lingam flourished exceedingly. Thus in Champa and Cambodia, in the islands of Java, Sumatra and Borneo, Shiva was worshipped in the form of the Lingam as was the case in almost all Shiva temples in India.*

THE LORE OF THE LINGAM

Though the earlier *Vedas* speak of the Lingam with contempt, later literature, particularly the *Puranas* and the *Tantras*, extol the superior merit of phallic worship. "Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and other Devas (gods) reside where Mahadeva is present in his Linga form. Thirty-five million known and unknown places of pilgrimage and all the holy shrines in the world are situated in the Shiva Kshetra. The land within a radius of hundred cubits of the Lingam is declared by the wise to be Shiva Kshetra. This land is exceedingly sacred. It is more holy than the most excellent of holy places; because here reside all immortals, and here also are all the holy places.

"Anything great or small (meritorious or otherwise) done in Shiva Kshetra becomes multiplied in its effect by the majesty of Shiva. All sins committed else-

* Details of the cultural expansion of India will be found in the author's work, *The Story of the Cultural Empire of India.*

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where are removed by going to Shiva Kshetra, but sins committed here adhere to a man with the strength of the thunderbolt. The merit acquired by the performance there of Purascharana, Japa, Shraddha, Tarpana or any other pious act is endless.

"The merit acquired by the performance of a hundred Purascharana at the time of lunar or solar eclipses is acquired by merely performing one Japa in Shiva Kshetra.

"By the offering of Pinda (funeral cakes made during Shraddha ceremony) once only in the land of Shiva, a man obtains the same fruit as he who offers ten million Pindas at Gaya, in the Ganga and at Prayaga (confluence of the Ganges and Jumna, a very sacred spot).

"Even in the case of Atipatakis and Mahapatakis (great sinners), their souls attain the supreme abode if Shraddha be performed in their names in the land of Shiva.

"The fourteen worlds abide there, where abides the Lord of the Universe in his Linga form, with the auspicious Devi Durga. And he who, in a devout spirit, lives there, be it even for a little while, becomes purged of all sins and goes to the heaven of Sankara after death.

"Whether the Linga is placed in the Gauripatra (representation of the Yoni in which the Linga is at times set) or not, the worshipper should, for the attainment of his desires, adore it devoutly.

"The person who causes a Linga to be installed gains much merit. By it, he is purified of all his sins, and goes to the supreme abode.

"There is no doubt, that by the installation of a Shiva Linga a man acquires ten million times the merit which is acquired by giving the world and all its gold, by the performance of ten thousand horse sacrifices, by digging a tank in a waterless country, or by making happy the poor and such as are enfeebled by disease."*

There are various accounts found in Hindu scriptures concerning the origin of the worship of the Lingam. These explanations were possibly put forward after the practice had been well established in Hinduism and as the curious wished to be enlightened, in an age of prudery, as to how something held to be unworthy of public exposure came to be accepted as the main object of worship in Shaivism.

In the *Linga Purana* is the most widely accepted account of the origin of the worship of the Lingam. In this scripture, Brahma, the creator, during a discourse delivered to the lesser gods of the pantheon on the omnipotence of the Lingam, observes:

"When I sprang into existence, I beheld the mighty Narayana (Vishnu) reposing on the Primal waters; and, being still under the influence of delusion, awakened him with my hand and thus addressed him: 'Who art thou, that thus slumberest on this raging sea?' Hari (Vishnu) awoke and dispelling sleep from his lotus-eyes, looked upon me, and then arising, said: 'Welcome, welcome, O Pitamaha! My dear son!' Offended by this speech of Narayana, I, still not free from the quality of Tamas (darkness or ignorance), replied: 'Why dost thou address me as thy son? Know me to be the eternal, the universal spirit, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the worlds.' But the great Narayana said: 'Hear the truth, O four-faced One (Brahma has four heads)! Know that it is I who am the creator, preserver and destroyer of the worlds and not you. Dost thou forget Narayana, the self-existent, the eternal ? But in thy misconceived claim of greatness, thou committest no fault; for thy error proceeds from Maya or bewilderment.' Thus arose

* Arthur Avalon, *Mahanirvana Tantra.*

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between us a terrible argument while we were still floating on the primal ocean, when to put an end to our quarrel and recall us to our senses, there appeared a Lingam, blazing like a thousand suns. Bewildered by its radiant beams, Hari thus said to me, lost in amazement: 'I will proceed downwards in order to discover the base of this wondrous column of fire; do thou, likewise, proceed upwards and find out its apex.' Having thus spoken, he assumed the form of a boar and I, that of a swan, and we both prosecuted our search for four thousand years, but unable to ascertain its terminations we returned, wearied and disappointed, to the same place from where we started. On this, we heard the mystic sound 'AUM', 'AUM', 'AUM', rising on all sides and we prostrated ourselves before the fiery column when in it appeared Shiva."

Many variations of this legend are found in certain other *Puranas*. In the *Skanda Purana*, for instance, it is related that the origin of Lingam-worship was occasioned by a misfortune to Shiva. This god, it would appear, wounded by the arrows of the love-god Kama, happened to wander in a forest inhabited by the seven sages, and their wives, seeing the god with his animated member, fell violently in love with him, deserted their husbands and followed him. On seeing this the sages cursed Shiva and, in consequence, his phallus fell off ; the earth could not sustain the impact of the fall and the Lingam descended to the Primal Ocean from where it started growing and filled the earth and the heavens above. The celestials, not knowing the cause of this rising effulgence, approached Brahma and Vishnu for enlightenment and these great gods themselves were no wiser; hence, Brahma as a swan flew upwards to find out the upper limit and Vishnu as a boar descended into the ocean to discover the base of the phenomenon. The attempts of both, however, were futile and they had to return.

Brahma, on his homeward journey from the frustrated attempt, happened to meet the divine cow Saurabhi browsing on the slopes of Mount Meru under a Ketaki tree. The god told the cow and the tree of the phenomenon of the Lingam and his futile journey and added, with a show of sorrow, that he would now be losing his position as the most important deity of the pantheon either to Vishnu, who had possibly discovered the base of the Lingam, or to the Lingam itself as he could not gauge its dimensions. Saurabhi and the tree took pity on the god and agreed to help him; he was to declare that he had perched on top of the Lingam as a swan, and if any unbeliever was to ask questions, the cow and the tree were to swear as witnesses corroborating Brahma's statement.

Well, things happened as Brahma had feared. On his asserting that he, in the form of a swan, had perched on the top of the Lingam, Vishnu who confessed that he was not able to fathom its base, challenged Brahma's statement, and asked him to produce witnesses. Ketaki and Saurabhi were now summoned and they attested Brahma's statement, when Shiva's forceful voice rose from the Lingam exposing all the three as liars. The gods immediately cursed the mouth of Saurabhi; and on this account, the cow, generally held sacred by the Hindus, is considered impure in its mouth. The use of the flowers of the Ketaki tree was prohibited in ritual. As for Brahma, his worship was stopped and that of the Lingam substituted; Vishnu was praised for his honesty and his worship continued as before.

It is interesting to note that this myth incidentally explains the general decay and disappearance of Brahma-worship among the Hindus. From ancient texts, it would appear, Brahma was once widely worshipped in India, but later, worship of Shiva and Vishnu became more important; at present Brahma is hardly wor-

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shipped in India, and with the exception of a temple at Pushkar he has no shrines of importance dedicated to him. So much for the fate of lying gods.

There are, it may be recalled, certain sects among the Hindus, especially among the Vaishnavas, who do not consider Lingam-worship with entire approval; if anything, they are inclined to think it a curse and not a blessing. Many stories about the origin of Lingam-worship, not altogether favourable to Shaivas, are found in some of the scriptures, and these are, in all probability, inspired by sectarians who did not have a very high opinion of the Lingam and its worship.

One such account is found in the *Padma Purana*. In this text it is given that the venerable sage Bhrigu went to Mount Kailas, the abode of Shiva, on some urgent business but was stopped at the entrance to Kailas by the gatekeeper who informed the sage that the god was in his private room enjoying the company of his wife. The sage waited, but the god of virility took so long to finish his business with his wife that Bhrigu, losing patience, cursed the god to be worshipped as the organ of his lust.

Another account is even more damaging to the reputation of Shiva. According to this story, Shiva married Sati who immolated herself in a sacrificial fire in her father's house to avenge an insult to her husband by her father; Shiva severely punished his father-in-law and his relatives whom he considered responsible for the death of his wife.* After this, stricken with grief, the god left his abode in Kailas and wandered through the worlds like a mad man. In this state he happened to stray into a forest inhabited by the seven sages, and their young wives seeing the demented Sadhu asked him the cause of his misfortune. Shiva told the ladies that he had a very devoted, beautiful, young wife who had killed herself to vindicate his honour, and he was mourning her death. On hearing this tragic tale, one of the ladies was so moved that she laughed aloud. On Shiva enquiring of her the cause of her hilarity, the lady told him that he looked indeed a man for whom a beautiful young lady would commit suicide! The behaviour of the fair mocker so infuriated the god of virility that he caught and ravished her. Her husband came on the scene and imprecated a curse by which the god was turned into a Lingam.

Quite a number of such stories are found in the various *Puranas* and in all there is some indication of curses by sages on Shiva. The seven sages of the Hindu pantheon do not seem to have been particularly impressed by the philosophic and mystic explanations generally advanced in favour of the worship of the Lingam by its adherents.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF LINGAMS

In the eulogy of the Lingam, found in the various Hindu scriptures, we come across descriptions of different kinds of Lingams with differing degrees of sanctity and potency. Some are Jyoti Lingams or resplendent Lingams in a perpetual state of blaze. Another Lingam is the Atma Lingam or "own Lingam" of Shiva, much extolled in the scriptures. Some devotees of Shiva are fabled to have obtained from the deity himself, this Atma Lingam by the power of which they became invincible. Ravana, the demon king of Lanka (see Chapter 1), is said to have obtained this Atma Lingam from the person of Shiva by severe austerities, but lost it through his folly.

While there are similar references in the scriptures to numerous types of

* The full story will be found in the author's work, *Epics, Myths and Legends of India.*

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Lingams, according to orthodox classification, Lingams fall into three main categories, known as, (1) Anadi or Swayambhu (self-generated), (2) Sthavara (immovable as installed and fixed), and (3) Jangama (movable).

Swayambhu Lingams are not fashioned by human hands but are created as such by Brahma and form part of the pattern of the universe. In their visible form, they "are merely rough stones or rocks, supposed to have descended direct from heaven or to have appeared miraculously on the soil. They are the most sacred of all material objects of worship, and, when discovered, temples are built over them. When shrines are built round them, a Yoni is usually, though not always, added."* Some of the great temples of India were built over such Anadi Lingams and Hindu scriptures mention a great number of these important shrines many of which were destroyed during the Muslim invasion of India. The great temple of Somnath, which Mahmud of Ghazni destroyed, contained, it seems, an Anadi Lingam. Of the temples now extant, Vaidyanatha, Tarakesvara and Chandrasekhara (at Chittagong) are believed to enshrine Swayambhu Lingams.

Lingams of the Swayambhu type are considered the most holy of the Lingams. The worship of such Lingams is said to bring liberation even to the outcaste and the fallen, hence shrines containing Anadi Lingams are great centres of pilgrimage for all classes of Hindus.

Unlike the self-generated Swayambhu, Sthavara Lingams are fashioned by human hands. There are regular rules laid down in the scriptures regarding the size, shape and material of these Lingams and the method of carving them. They are called Sthavara or fixed because once installed in a shrine, they are not to be moved. These Lingams are usually made of granite though wooden ones are also made.

The Sthavara Lingam of the ordinary type appears as a smooth, round, mound-shaped stone, rising out of another; the latter is in shape like an elongated saucer and would appear to the casual observer to be separate from the former, though in reality both are carved out of a single block. "The outline of the lower which calls to mind a Jew's harp (the conventional form of the *pudendum muliebre*) they call Argha or Yoni. The former (a rounded perpendicular stone), the type of the virile organ, is the Lingam. The entire image to which the name Linga-Yoni is given, is also generally called the Lingam."†

The Yoni or Argha receives the consecrated water poured over the Lingam at the time of worship, which flows out through a spout provided for the purpose in the Yoni. In the worship of the Lingam, the deity adored is the male and not the female nor even the union of the two, and as such the Yoni has but a secondary place in the cult of the Lingam; hence some of the Lingams are carved without the Yoni.

Temples dedicated to Sthavara Lingams are numerous in India at present. In fact, in practically all great Shaiva temples the main object of worship is the Lingam, the various other forms of Shiva, his spouse and his sons being carved on the walls in the main shrine or installed in subsidiary shrines. The emphasis is on the static principle, the principle of meditation and intellectualism as opposed to Karma, or active form of religion. The more famous of living Shiva temples are in Benares in the north, Jejuri in Maharashtra and Chidambaram in the south.

Jangama Lingams are portable Lingams made of metal, clay, soapstone,

* Monier Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India.*

† Ibid.

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or any other convenient material and are of such shape and size as would render them easy to carry. Such Lingams are made for temporary worship at home, in minor ceremonies performed by priests in houses or at places of pilgrimage where free-lance priests perform certain rituals for the benefit of individual pilgrims at their request and on payment. The Jangama Lingams are also worn by the members of the sect of Lingayats, of whom more presently.

The material of which a Lingam is made is important, and the *Agni Purana* enumerates the merit that accrues by worshipping Lingams made of different materials. A Lingam made of salt or butter is capable of developing the intellect. One made of clay gives wealth. "There is greater merit in worshipping a wooden Lingam, than a clay one; one of stone is better than that of wood; a Lingam made of pearl is better than one of stone, and one of gold better than those made of other metals." Lingams made of gold and silver can be studded with precious stones and the merit accruing from their worship is generally in proportion to their material value.

Of the number and quality of the Lingams, the *Shiva Purana* says: "The Lingams of Sada Shiva are innumerable. The whole earth is replete with them; whatever is visible, is a form of the Lingam. Besides, no place is without them; both heavens and nether regions are stocked with them; all celestials and sages are occupied with their worship. And for those who, with complete devotion and entire faith, have worshipped them, the great god, for the gratification of such devotees, hath appeared and established himself there, at the desire of the votaries with a Lingam for each particular case of demand. The Lingams which are extant over the universe, thus, are not to be counted."

THE LINGAYATS

We have seen that the worship of the Lingam in India has no connection with the licence, orgies or mysteries that marked phallic cults in the ancient religions of the Mesopotamian or Mediterranean regions. In fact, the worship of the Lingam is particularly free from emotionalism, both in its philosophic concept and in practice; in a shrine dedicated to the Lingam, the Puja or worship consists in the devotees offering flowers and making obeisance to the image of the Lingam, as they do to the images of other deities. In fact, an outsider, not knowing the real significance of the Lingam, will find in it nothing, either in appearance or in the mode of worship, that can even remotely be termed indecent; even the young ladies who worship the symbol daily are not aware what the Lingam really means and consider it a formless representation of the deity in his most harmless form, especially as the Lingam is happily free from those fearsome adornments like snakes, tiger-skin, extra hands and murderous weapons that generally adorn the images of Shiva and his manifestations.

The basic idea of this purity of worship connected with the cult of the Lingam is nowhere so clearly seen as in the practice and philosophy of the sect known as Lingayats who exclusively worship the Lingam and believe in no other deities or forms of Shiva. They may be said to be the most strict and Puritanic sect among the Hindus, from Western standards, and some description of them is indispensable to a chapter allotted to the worship of the Lingam.

The sect was founded by one Basava, a Brahmin of Bijapur, in the twelfth century of the Christian era. This was a time when Jainism was predominant in

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South India, especially in the Telegu and Canara regions, and Basava appeared as a Hindu revivalist. He maintained that Hinduism had fallen from its original purity and wished to restore its purer tenets. Accordingly, he discarded his sacred thread, rejected caste and the dogma of transmigration, so dear to the Hindu, and preached an uncompromising monotheism. He deprecated idolatry in general and maintained that the most appropriate symbol of the deity, in the Nirguna form (without attributes), was the Lingam which his followers were enjoined to wear as the visible emblem of their faith. He also attacked sacrificial religion, so long established as an integral part of Shaivism.

Basava "was a resolute opponent of every Brahminical principle. The Brahmins inculcated the adoration of many gods; he declared that there was but one deity. They venerated goddesses and subordinate beings, reverenced cows, hawks, monkeys, rats and snakes, used fasts and feasts, penance and pilgrimage, rosaries and holy water, all of which Basava renounced."* Abolishing caste, he declared all men were born equal; rejecting the dogma of metempsychosis, he maintained that the souls of all Lingayats were absorbed in the deity on death. The Lingayats bury the dead.

Some scholars see in Basava's reforming zeal, the influence of Islam and Christianity. Christianity had been established in South India from the very beginning of the Christian era,† and by the twelfth century the influence of Islam also was widely felt in South India which had close commercial contacts with Muslim countries.

The cardinal point in the Lingayat doctrine is an unquestioning faith in the efficacy of the Lingam to grant its wearer spiritual merit. It is the most solemn duty of every Lingayat, man or woman, to wear the Lingam as a locket, amulet or in any other way, and its loss is considered a misfortune as great as spiritual death; if, however, a Lingam is lost, the loser can be invested with a new one after certain ceremonies.

By the elevating power of this symbol of their religion, all caste distinctions disappear the moment a man joins the sect and is invested with the Lingam. "Even if a Pariah joins the sect, he is considered in no way inferior to a Brahmin. Wherever the Lingam is found, there they say is the throne of the deity, without distinction of class or rank. The Pariah's humble hut containing the Lingam is far above the most magnificent palace where it is not."

The Lingam the Lingayat wears "consists of two discs, the lower one circular, about one-eighth of an inch thick, the upper, slightly elongated. Each disc is about three quarters of an inch in diameter and is separated by a deep groove about an eighth of an inch broad. From the centre of the upper disc which is slightly rounded, rises a pea-like knob, giving the Lingam a total height of nearly three quarters of an inch."

These Jangama Lingams are generally made of grey soapstone found at Srisaila in Kurnool District in the Andhra State. They are brought by special class of carriers known as Kambi Jangams because "besides the Lingam stone, they bring on a Kambi or shoulder bamboo, the holy water of the Patala Ganga (underground Ganges), a pool on Parvatigiri in Srisailam; the water of this pool the Lingayats hold as sacred as the Brahmins hold the Ganges water."

The Lingams are worn by the Lingayats in a conspicuous place on their body,

* Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India.*

† For the influence of Christianity on Hinduism, see the author's work, *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan.*

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usually on the neck or arm. On the death of a person, it is placed in the left hand of the deceased. "The bulk of the cultivators enclose it in a red scarf tied round their necks, with a knot in front. This scarf is tied on the arm above the elbow when the wearer is at work, and is placed round the head while bathing. Some of the traders of the richer class carry it in a small silver box hung round the neck with a thread called Sivadhara or in a gold box studded with precious stones. The women do not wear it outside their dress, but generally keep it on a neck string."*

The priests of the Lingayats are known as Jangams and most of their rituals are performed by these and not by regular Brahmins. The Jangams are not forbidden to marry, but most of them remain celibate of their own accord. They are held in extraordinary reverence by the community and the water in which their feet are washed is used in many ceremonials.

The Lingayats are strict disciplinarians where food and drink are concerned. Vegetarianism is enforced on all. Drinking of spirituous liquor is totally prohibited.

They have five great centres of pilgrimage called Simhasanas or Lion-thrones situated at Kedarnath, Benares, Ujjain, Srisailam and Kadur and in every Lingayat village there is a monastery attached to one or other of these Simhasanas. Pilgrimage to these centres is considered a very meritorious act, and the more religious-minded of the Jangams wander most of their lives visiting these shrines.

At present, the influence of the Lingayats is mainly confined to southern India; in the north the sect has few adherents.

* Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India.*

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9. *The Sakti Cult*

WHILE THE worship of the Lingam is exoteric and free from objectionable rituals, the cult of the Yoni, or the female principle, is essentially esoteric and none but the initiated can take part in its mysteries. As was the case with the mystery cults of the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean regions, in India too, the exact nature of the rituals is not divulged to the public. The Yoni, unlike the Lingam, is seldom represented alone, but figures prominently in Mudras and Yantras; when it is worshipped, especially in the more solemn of its mysteries, the object of adoration is not an emblem, but the Yoni of a living woman, and the rituals are generally concluded by communal sex intercourse by the congregation who are all initiates; the need for secrecy in such a cult must now be obvious to the reader.

Those who worship the female principle in the universe are known as Saktas in India, because they worship Sakti or energy, the creative principle which is conceived as feminine in Hindu mysticism. They are also known as Tantrics as their main scriptures are called *Tantras*; other texts that deal with the philosophy and practices of the sect are *Yamalas* and *Rahasyas*, all highly esoteric texts of which few have been published. The only reliable work of the Tantrics so far published is the *Mahanirvana Tantra*, which is one of the mildest of the Tantric texts. In this work too, the importance of the female is emphasized and worship is mentioned as futile unless accompanied by wine and woman, and their three adjuncts of meat, fish and corn.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SAKTI CULT

The Saktas, though recognizing the authority of the *Vedas* like all other orthodox Hindu sects, do admit that their ritual is not strictly Vedic as was practised in ancient India. The main reason they advance in favour of this departure from ancient tradition is that practical religion should adapt itself to changing conditions in the world, and what was good enough for the Vedic age is not good enough for us. The idea is linked with the theory of the morally decaying universe, taught by all orthodox Hindu schools and given in detail in the first chapter of this book. The Vedic ritual, the Tantrics say, was meant for the Krita Yuga; the good men of that age, they maintain, could understand and appreciate it and social conditions were congenial for its practice. For instance, the Aryans in Vedic times followed the Asramas strictly; by the term Asrama is meant the four stages of a man's life, each regulated by the needs of society or of individual salvation. In the first Asrama, Brahmacharya or studentship, an Aryan boy left his parent's home and lived in the house of a recognized Guru or teacher, studying the sciences, sacred and profane, and remaining strictly celibate; at the age of about thirty, he returned home and married and entered the Grahastha Asrama or the stage of the householder; after having reared his sons to manhood, he entered the third

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stage, Vanaprastha, and lived in a forest the life of renunciation; in the fourth and last stage, Sanyasa, he became completely detached from the ties of the world and wandered from place to place eating what chance brought, looking forward to union with the Infinite in death. "Who, in these modern days," asks the Tantric, "practise these Vedic injunctions?" Merely performing the Vedic rituals without discharging the other obligations enjoined by the *Vedas*, the Tantrics maintain, can only lead to misery and frustration and not to happiness and liberation. Hence they say that different practices suited to varying needs of different ages of the world cycles should be followed by the intelligent, instead of blindly copying standards that have outlived their times. Broadly speaking, Vedic ritual was best suited for the Krita Yuga (for Yugas, see Chapter 1), the Sastras (religion based on the *Dharma Sastras* or law books) for the Threta Yuga, and the *Puranas** for the Dwapara Yuga. In Kali Yuga, our own wild days, the intelligence of man has deteriorated, the quality of Tamas (ignorance, darkness or coarseness) predominates him and he is unable to grasp or follow the precepts taught in a bygone age to men whose physical and mental powers were much greater. Hence it is worse than useless to ask the morally degenerate people of our age to practise the ancient precepts; they simply can't do it.

Nor is it possible to improve mankind by any amount of preaching and elevate them to the high level of Krita Yuga, for there is a fatality in the moral decay of the universe; just as a man cannot prevent old age and death by taking thought, the universe that comes into being in the beginning of a Kalpa, must, of necessity, age morally, pass through the degeneration of the Kali Yuga and end up in ultimate dissolution or Pralaya.

All told, the practices of the Vedic age were of no practical value for later ages, and a new revelation became necessary for the Kali Yuga; and the Tantrics maintain that their texts embody this new revelation.

The gist of the Tantric teaching is that the old attitude towards life needs a radical change: The ancient ideals of doing good for evil, of asceticism and renunciation, are no longer effective in the present age. Liberation is to be sought not through escape from life and its pleasures, but rather by enjoying oneself with understanding and making use of the good things of life to the best advantage. The world and its pleasures, the Tantrics too admit, are ephemeral, the results of Maya; but reality is not different from Maya; on the contrary, Maya and all that it stands for have their roots in reality, and if Maya is properly pursued, the pursuit will eventually lead to supreme reality, or the Universal Soul. Hence there is no need for man to be morose to be liberated.

In pursuance of this doctrine, the Tantric texts ordain a mode of worship in which the good things of life may be freely used. Occult powers may be obtained through magic and Mantras in order to combat one's enemies and establish dominion over others. Evil need not necessarily be overcome by good; in fact, in the Kali Yuga, the good are mistaken for the weak, humility is reckoned hypocrisy, and Ahimsa, cowardice. So it is good to return blow for blow, overcome violence by superior force, and temptation by indulgence. The *Tantras* particularly maintain that while the followers of other religions can obtain either the pleasures of this world *or* of the next but not both, Tantrics, initiated in the mysteries, "have both in the palms of their hands."

* Detailed description of the *Puranas* and other Hindu scriptures will be found in the author's work, *Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners.*

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So then, "the vale of tears," "the hall of sorrow," "Ghora Samsara" and such other names by which certain schools of transcendental mysticism designate life do not affect the Tantric. For the Tantric, "the world is the playground (Lilakshetra) of the all-blissful Anandamayi. The world is neither an illusion nor a non-reality; nor is it under the government of the Ruler of Hell, whose tyrannous sway drives sensible men first to raise the standard of revolt, and then, when they find no king great enough to drive the tyrant off, stampedes them to the unknown and unknowable kingdom of an abstraction believed to be absolute existence, absolute knowledge and absolute bliss. But to their misfortune and discomfiture, they come to realise that the ramparts, battlements and fortifications of the supposed arch-devil are impregnable; that as far as their imagination can extend, his empire also extends; and that their own selves—that is their minds and whatever constitute their individual selves—is of the same material as that with which the alleged nefarious world is constituted. Having learnt this sad truth at last, many Sadhakas of other schools fall precipitatedly from the height of their hopes and aspirations. Discomfited, dejected and crestfallen, they can neither seek the supreme object of their life, Paramartha, nor reconcile themselves to the world in which they have to live not only their present lives, but many more lives to come! This dismal philosophy is not merely the heirloom of Sadhakas. It has been almost indelibly impressed upon the consciousness of the ordinary run of men, with the result that the Hindus are in general pessimists and fatalists in a high degree."*

The Tantric, on the other hand, is made to feel that life glows with divinity, that life and its pleasures are not different from divinity or reality, and he attains liberation "eating the sweet fruits of this life as well." To him the world and its pleasures are real and not illusory. All told, the Tantric path ensures its devotee the good things of this world and the next.

The Tantric philosophy, then, is a curious combination of materialism and spiritualism. By properly pursuing the material, it is maintained, a man can reach the spiritual. Agreeable to this philosophy, the mysteries of Tantric ritual consist mainly of the worshippers partaking of what is known as Panchatatvas or Five Elements, namely, Madya (liquor), Mamsa (meat), Matsya (fish), Mudra (corn) and Maithuna (sexual intercourse). The Panchatatvas are also known as Makaras or the five M's. The Tantric discipline also aims at rousing the hidden powers in man through Hatha Yoga and obtaining occult powers called Siddhis by which men can work miracles. This subject will be dealt with later; for the present we will confine ourselves to the art of cultivating the pleasurable in religion through worship with the five M's.

The scientific basis for the Panchatatva worship is thus explained by the Tantric commentator Tarkalankara: "By the poison that destroys life, the physician destroys also disease. The root of Homeopathy is to cure illness by that which causes illness. Amongst us also there is the tradition that poison is destroyed by poison. What then makes a man sin and die before his time, the object of contempt of all? The first amongst these causes are wine and women; meat, fish, Mudra and such other things taken along with liquor are accessories; these five Tatvas are the primary cause of the terrific incurable disease called Samsara. The stupefying power of wine and women is so great as to lure even great sages and hurl them into the abyss of darkness and ignorance. Here Shiva prescribes the poison that eradicates poison. We know, as other Saddhakas do, that this Homeopathic system

* Arthur Avalon, *Introduction to the Principles of Tantra.*

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of Shiva is infallible and yields speedy results. He who thirsts for wine or lusts after women can be cured by the treatment within a very short time. But the physician, that is the Guru, must be experienced and skilful. A slight error in the administration of poison may lead to fatal results. On this account has Shiva declared that the path of Kulachara is more difficult than walking on the edge of a sword or embracing the neck of a tiger."*

This explanation, it must be borne in mind, is for the benefit of Pasu (animal, a Tantric term for the slow of understanding) who considers woman as a temptation and a snare. The true Tantric conception of woman as we have seen, is as the prime force that moves the universe and a mortal woman is but the manifestation of this all-pervading Sakti.

THE TANTRIC PANTHEON

Woman has many aspects and a man's relation to her is conditioned by these. The three main aspects, known to the generality of men, are as the mother, the wife and the daughter. While cults have developed around both the mother and daughter aspects of Sakti, it is the wife-aspect that predominates the more thorough-going of the sex cults, especially the mysteries known as Chakra Puja or Circle Worship. In her wife-aspect, the goddess is generally conceived as the spouse of Shiva, the god of the phallus; according to the generally accepted Hindu social notions, the wife is subordinate to her husband and there are even lawgivers who maintain that a wife has no individuality except that of her husband. But in the Sakti cult, the goddess is superior to her spouse and the latter has hardly any place in the cult except as her abject worshipper.

As the goddess of beauty, splendour and desire, Sakti is generally conceived as Tripura Sundari, residing in a magnificent, jewelled palace in the milk ocean, attended by all the gods and goddesses of the pantheon. She is so desire-inspiring that the *Ananda Lahari* says: "If but a side-glance from her eyes falls on a blind old man incapable of passion, then hundreds of young, beautiful girls will run after him with loosened hair, their upper garments slipping off their rounded, pitcher-like breasts, their girdles and lower garments falling about them."

This is but one aspect of Sakti. The Tantric pantheon consists of innumerable goddesses, some beautiful and benign, some fierce and forbidding, each one appropriate to a particular context in ritual. In the work known as *Sahasra Nama*, one thousand names or manifestations of Sakti are mentioned, and these are often repeated as a sort of litany for gaining spiritual merit. But even this one thousand, is but a drop in the ocean of her names, forms and manifestations; all the gods of the pantheon, the demons, in fact, all creatures have their Saktis and all planes are replete with them.

Again, the goddess "is both terrible and benign, white and black, beautiful and hideous, destructress and benefactress. Each of these characters became variously modified and endlessly multiplied. The mild nature ramified into Saktis called Uma, Gauri, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, etc., while the black or fierce nature, into those called Kali, Chandi, Chamunda, Bhavani, Chinnamastaka, etc."

These manifestations or personifications of Sakti are, at times, grouped into classes according to Gunas or qualities predominating each. For it is a well-known Hindu doctrine that the same principle or personality appears in different forms

* Ibid.

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according to the proportion of the three main Gunas that constitute it. As already stated, Satva Guna is the desirable quality and may be termed, refinement, and celestials and good men are generally predominated by it. Tamas is undesirable and denotes coarseness, darkness, etc. Rajas, the third Guna, is generally conceived as activity; while Rajas in itself is neither desirable nor undesirable, its predominance shows up Satva or Tamas in a more pronounced manner.

The more forbidding forms of Sakti, such as Kali, Bhavani, etc., are under the influence of Tamas while the benign forms like Gauri, Uma, etc., are dominated by the quality of Satva. Then there are manifestations in which Sakti shows herself in varying proportions. In Purna Sakti, for instance, the goddess manifests herself in full, while there are Ansa Rupinis (partial manifestations), Kala Rupinis (still more partial) and Kala Ansa Rupinis (partial of the partial), this last including mortal women of various types and castes, "from Brahmin women downwards who are worshipped as forms of the divine mother manifesting herself upon the earth; for it must not be forgotten that in Sakta creed every female is a present deity."*

It is quite impossible to enumerate all the goddesses of the Tantric pantheon, but some of the more important may be mentioned. Sakti stands as the supreme source of everything, celestial, terrestrial and demoniac. Below her are ten Maha Vidyas, the hierarchy of the greatest Tantric wisdom. They are: 1) Kali (literally, black, and hence also called Syama or Shyama), dark and destructive, the presiding deity, as we have seen, of Pralaya or Chaos; 2) Tara, a benign manifestation worshipped especially in Kashmir; she is at present a prominent deity of Tantric Buddhism; 3) Shodasi (of sixteen), a beautiful girl of sixteen, often identified with Tripura Sundari, (see page 92); 4) Bhuvanesvari (mistress of the universe); 5) Bhairavi (the fearsome); 6) Chinnamastaka (severed head; a naked, blood-thirsty form of the goddess, holding, in one hand, a scimitar, and in the other her own severed head, the mouth of which drinks the blood spouting from the cut neck); 7) Dhumavati (in the form of Dhuma or smoke); 8) Vagala or Bagala (having the face of a crane); 9) Matangi (a woman of the Chandala, outcaste); and 10) Kamalatmika. Of these ten, the first two are Maha Vidyas proper (Vidya means learning, wisdom or attainment and Maha, great), the next five, Vidyas and the last three, Siddha Vidyas (of Siddhi or occult powers).

Almost as great as Maha Vidyas and more often invoked in worship are the Matrikas or Divine Mothers; some texts mention a large number of them, others seven or eight. When the number is eight, they are called Ashta Matrikas or Eight Mothers, and their names are: 1) Vaishnavi, 2) Brahmi, 3) Kartikeyi, 4) Indrani, 5) Yami, 6) Varahi, 7) Isani, and 8) Narasimhi. These are, as the names suggest, the Saktis or wives of Vishnu, Brahma, Kartikeya, Indra, Yama, Varaha (boar incarnation of Vishnu), Isa (a form of Shiva), and Narasimha (man-lion incarnation of Vishnu) respectively. Then there are numerous Yoginis, the goddesses of weird occult sciences, and fierce forms known as Dakinis and Sakinis, each having peculiar functions, and invoked on proper occasions for good or evil.

The most forbidding form of the goddess, the manifestation in which Tamas inflamed by Rajas shows itself in its blackest colour is Kali. The goddess is generally described in Tantric literature as "black, with a horrid, gaping mouth and dishevelled hair; who has four hands and a splendid garland formed of the heads of

* Monier Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India.*

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the demons she has killed and whose blood she has drunk; who holds a sword in her lotus-like hands; who is fearless and awards blessings; who is as black as large clouds, and who has the sky for her clothes; who has a string of skulls in her neck, and a throat besmeared with blood; who wears ear-rings consisting of two dead bodies; who carries two corpses in her hands; who has horrid, crooked teeth and a laughing face; whose form is fearful, who dwells in the cremation grounds for consuming corpses; who stands on the breast of her husband Mahadeva."

The reason why she is depicted as standing on the prostrate body of her husband has been given differently in different texts. The Tantric explanation is that the prostrate Shiva is Shava or corpse, the static principle, and she, the dynamic principle. In certain other accounts it is said that Shiva, as the god of destruction and regeneration, is Kal or Time and the figure indicates the conquest of Kal by Kali. A more charitable explanation is that the goddess, after destroying a particularly ferocious demon, indulged in a wild dance, and the violent rhythm, on gaining momentum, disturbed the worlds in their orbits and the gods, fearing the universe would fly to pieces, requested Shiva to bring his wife to her senses; on this, Shiva laid himself on the ground before the goddess who, trampling on the body of her husband, felt, like a dutiful wife, ashamed of herself and stopped the dance.

Kali is widely invoked in magical rites, as we have seen, and magic is dear to the Tantric. She is also the presiding deity of the more advanced of Tantric mysteries wherein complete emancipation from social bonds into the anarchic Pralaya is attempted in practice.

CHAKRA PUJA WITH PANCHATATVA

The Saktas are broadly divided into two: Dakshinamargis, who follow the Right Hand path, and Vamamargis who follow the Left. Though the appellation is not intended to indicate anything undesirable as things connected with the left generally are, the practices of the Vamamargis are suspect to other sects of Hindus. The Vamamargis themselves maintain that they are so called not because they follow the Left Hand path, but because in their system of worship Vama or woman has an important place (Vama means, left or woman); further, they are also called Kaulas because their practices, they maintain, are Kaula or noble; another derivation of the name Kaula is that they follow the *Kaula Upanishad* attached to the *Vedas*.

Dakshinamargis, as a rule, worship the goddess in her mother aspect; they are respecters of social conventions and even those of them who believe in the efficacy of the Panchatatva use symbolical substances in worship.

The Vamamargis, on the other hand, give greater importance to the wife aspect of the goddess, and they consider symbolic worship as futile when the real stuff is available. Their nocturnal rites are known as Chakra Pujas (Circle Worship) as the congregations sit in circles for partaking of the Panchatatvas. These circles are of different kinds, some constituting the lower grades of initiates who have not got over social standards and conventions completely, and others of Viras or heroes who are fully initiated into the mysteries and, as such, capable of appreciating practices which may not appeal to the timid. Again, in certain circles, a single woman is worshipped, while in others each worshipper brings his own Sakti.

What exactly happens in the circles of the more thoroughgoing of the sub-

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92. DURGA FIGHTING THE BUFFALO DEMON
(*From* N. C. Mehta's *Studies in Indian Painting*)

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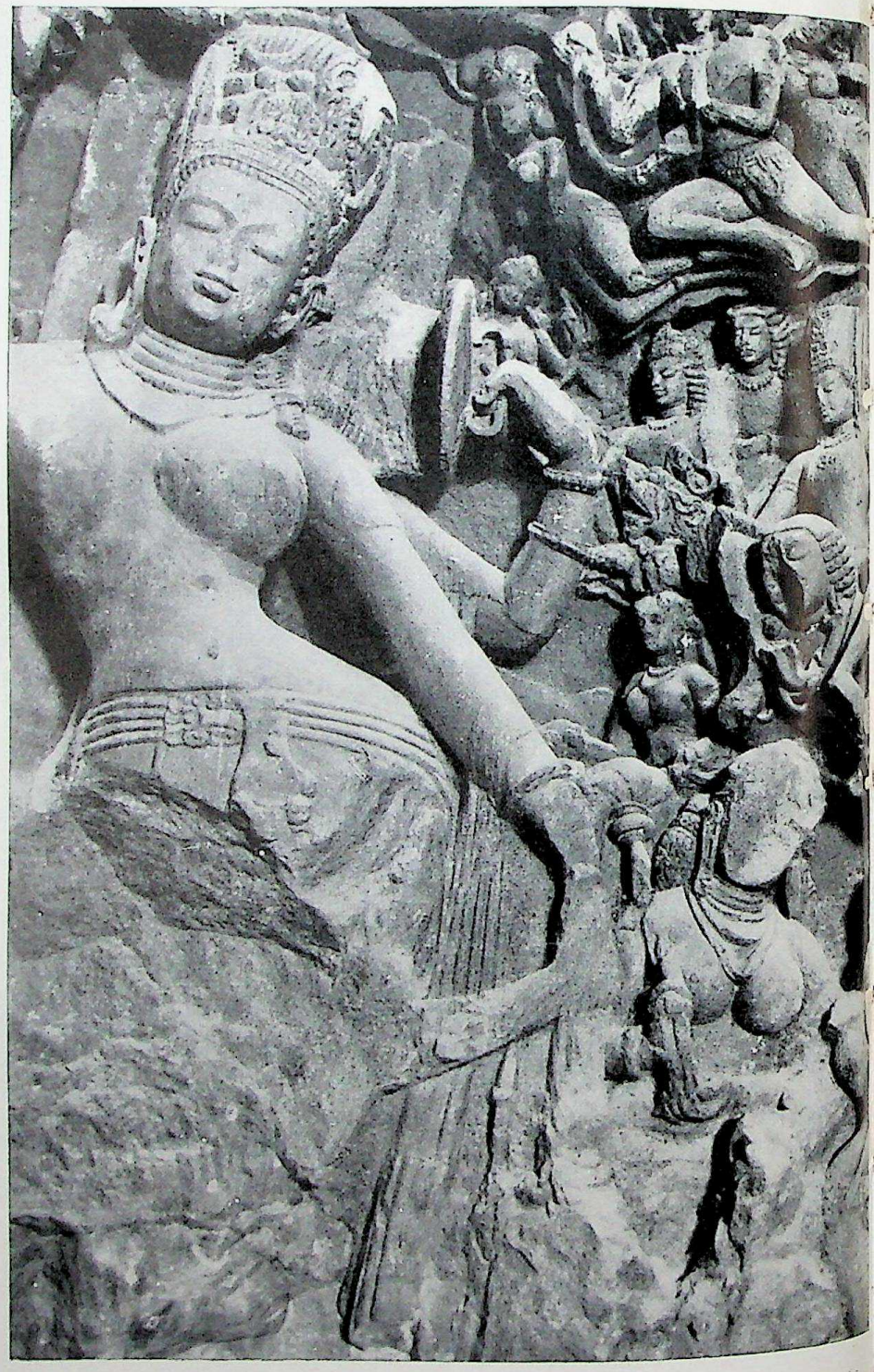

93. MOTHER GODDESS
Mother cults assumed various forms in later Hinduism, and in the magical rites of Tantrics, goddesses occupy a predominant position
(*From* Harappa. Cir. 3000 B.C. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

94. ARDHANARI
(Half-man, half-woman). A form of Shiva signifying the union of the two sexual principles
(*From* Elephanta. *Courtesy*: Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay)

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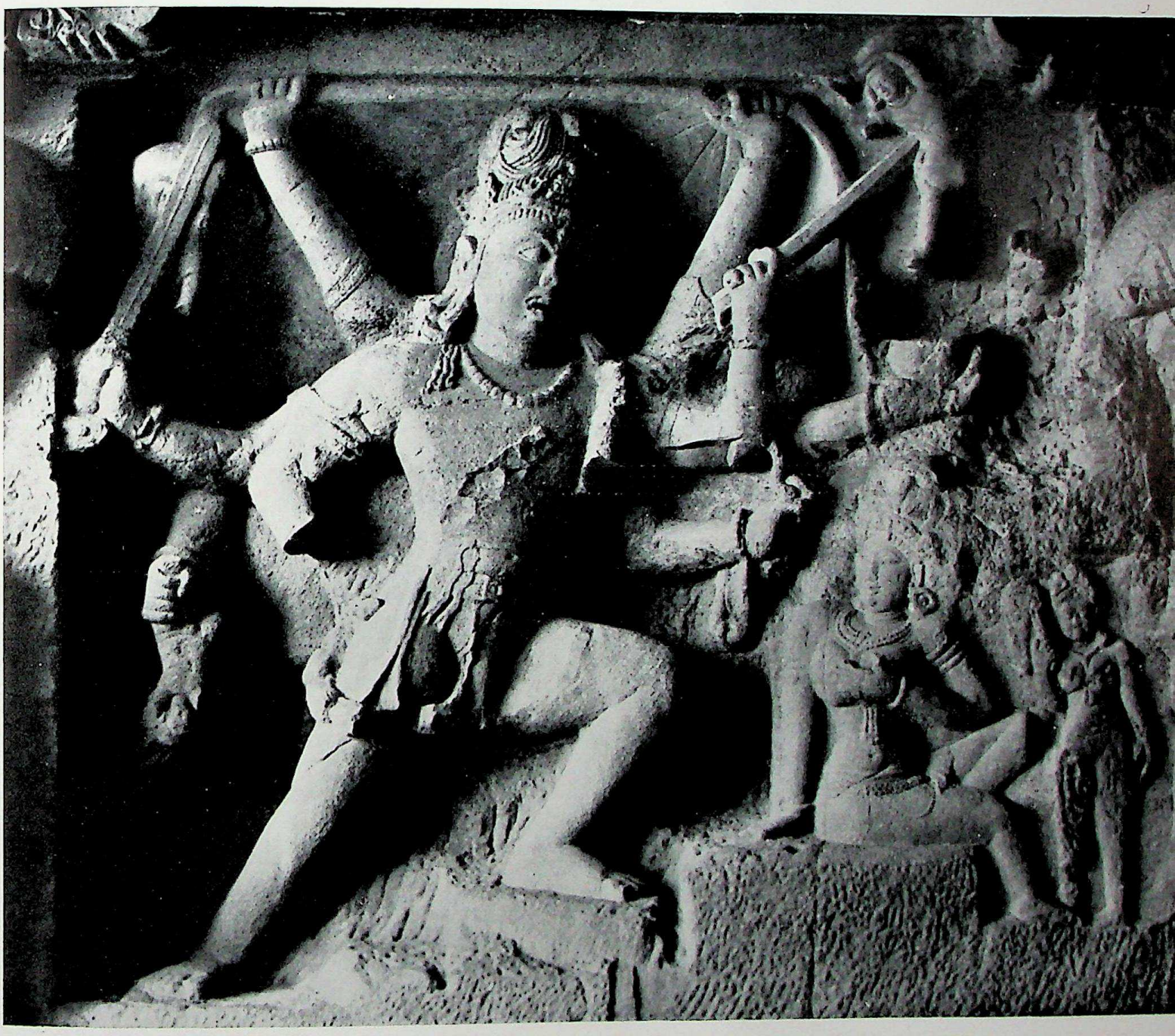
95. SHIVA DESTROYING THE DEMON OF DARKNESS.
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)



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96. SHIVA DESTROYING THE DEMON TRIPURA (*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

97. SAPTA MATRIKAS (SEVEN MOTHERS) (*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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sects of Vamacharis remains, even now, a guarded secret. The initiates, for obvious reasons, do not divulge the mysteries, and the texts ordaining the practices are considered esoteric, and only the milder ones that do not offend public taste have been published. Tantric literature is in fact even more voluminous than that of any other sect; the *Rudrayamala* alone, for instance, is said to contain 125,000 Slokas and, as such, exceeds in length the *Mahabharata*, the largest Hindu scripture so far published, which consists only of 100,000. There are, besides, numerous other Tantric texts which are almost as large as the *Rudrayamala* while lesser works are even greater in number.

One of the few published texts of the Tantrics, as already stated, is known as the *Mahanirvana Tantra* or the Tantra of the Great Liberation. It is a later text and its tone indicates that it does not approve of practices recommended in certain older works. The book has been translated and edited by the distinguished Tantric scholar, Sir John Woodroffe, who wrote under the pen-name of Arthur Avalon and for the following accounts of Circle Worship I am mainly indebted to his translation and commentary.

The Panchatatvas, as already stated, consist of Madya (liquor), Mamsa (meat), Matsya (fish), Mudra (parched grain or corn), and Maithuna (sexual intercourse). "The characteristic of the first element is that it is the great medicine that helps humanity to forget sorrows and generate cheerfulness and joy of life. The second element, the meat of animals bred in villages or forests, is nourishing to the body and increases intelligence, energy and strength. Fish, that lives in water is of pleasant taste and increases generative power. The fourth element Mudra is grown on the earth and as such is the root of life, easily obtainable and the sustainer of all life. The characteristic of the fifth element is that it is the cause of the greatest pleasure and joy in creation, the power that generates life and the mainstay of this universe; as the universe is without beginning or end, so is sexual power. It is 'in the microcosm (Kshudra Brahmanda) a particle of the cosmic creative energy. The seed (*retas*) is a material precipitate of the Will to Life.' "

Having thus established the need for strengthening life by means of the Tatvas, the text proceeds to explain the detailed process of Chakra Puja. Maithuna or sexual pleasure is obligatory in the more advanced of the mysteries, and three kinds of women are permitted to be brought into the Circle. Swiya is one's own wife, Parakiya is "another woman" and Sadharani a "common woman." A man who can find no Sakti can be provided with one for the Circle; such a Sakti according to certain texts, must undergo the formalities of a marriage known as "Shaiva" among the Tantrics. This form is not recognized by the regular Hindu law-givers but Tantrics have their own codes in such matters. A Shaiva marriage can, in theory, be for life; in this case, though the man has no obligation to recognise her as his wife in public, he has a secret responsibility to support her and her children born of him. Such permanent marriages are, however, rare; what happens is, a short marriage ceremony is gone through at the time of forming the Circle, in the presence of the worshippers, after which the woman becomes a Bhogya Sakti or one who can be enjoyed as distinct from Pujya Sakti or one who can only be worshipped. When the Circle is dissolved after the ritual, the woman is divorced, and the worshipper has no obligation whatsoever in respect of her, and for the next Chakra he may "marry" another woman. "In Shaiva marriage there is no restriction of age or caste, as far as the woman is concerned. A widow can also marry. The only restriction is that the woman has not already a living husband and

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she should not be a Sapinda (near relative)." For obvious reasons women getting married for a Chakra, according to Shaiva rites, are not highly respectable. In fact, the sect has in it many influential and wealthy persons as well as dignitaries of many rich temples, and the priests of Vamachara have never found it difficult to procure Saktis for their worshippers. When temples harboured Devadasis, the matter was comparatively easy; the institution, though prohibited by law, has been retained in certain temples in subtle forms; when consecrated women are not available for the rite, common women or Sadharanis can be hired.

Another peculiarity of Circle Worship is that in spite of its intimacy and esoteric nature, all castes are admitted into the Circle. "Once a worshipper enters the circle of Devi, he becomes a Brahmin; once the circle is dissolved, he reverts to his normal caste in the social scale." And such is the hold of the sect on its members that though low castes, and even prostitutes, are admitted into the Circle, few, if any, who have been initiated into the mysteries, have become apostates or divulged the nature of the rites to the public. This, in spite of the fact that unlike the members of other secret societies and gangs, the Tantric apostates have no physical dangers to fear from their co-religionists but only punishment in the life to come.

We may now give in detail the method of Circle Worship. The first item of the ritual is the installation of the deity. For this purpose, the Yantra, of the particular form of the goddess to be worshipped on the occasion, is drawn on a metal base, and an image placed on it, or the Yantra itself, as representing the deity, is ceremonially installed on a jewelled altar to the accompaniment of the inevitable repetition of Mantras.

The next important item of the ceremony is "placing the jar." The jar is called Kalasha because "Visvakarma (the Vulcan of the Hindus) made it from the different Kalas or parts of the bodies of the celestials" (meaning the jar contains the different spiritual qualities of the deities of the pantheon). The dimensions of the jar have been given. "It should be thirty-six angulas (fingers) in circumference, in its widest part, and sixteen in height. The neck should be four angulas in diameter and the mouth six and the bottom five. This is the rule for the design of the Kalasha. It should be made of gold, silver, copper, bell-metal, clay, stone or glass and should be without patches or stains. In its making, all miserliness is to be avoided, since it is fashioned for the pleasure of the deities. A Kalasha made of gold, silver, copper or bell-metal gives prosperity, emancipation, contentment or nourishment, respectively, to the worshippers. One of crystal is capable of producing Vashikarana (the bringing of a thing or person under control) and one of stone, Sthambhana (stupefaction). A Kalasha made of clay is good for Marana (death), Ucchatana (injury) Vidveshana (enmity) and Svastayana (for peace).... Whatever material it may be made of, the Kalasha must be of a pleasing appearance, and clean from all impurities."

The jar is to be placed in a Yantra drawn between the host and his Sakti, to their front. The Yantra is a hexagon with a Sunya or zero in its centre enclosed in a circle with a square outside it. The Yantra is to be drawn in vermilion, red sandal paste or Kula flower.* The jar is to be placed on a support which, before placing the jar, should be worshipped by repeating the Mantra, "Hring! Adhara Shaktaya Namah!" (Hring! Salutation to the Shakti of the support). The support should then be washed by repeating the Mantra "Namah!" and placed in the Yantra;

* For Kula flower, see page 38, footnote.

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after this, the jar should be taken in the hand of the worshipper, protected by repeating the weapon Mantra "Phut" over it, and then gently placed on the support.

A word may here be said about the seating arrangement in the circle. The host of the circle sits in a central position with his Sakti to his left. Between them but in front are the Kalasha and other articles of worship. The guests sit round in a circle, men and women alternating, the woman always seated on the left of her man.

After placing the jar, it is filled with Madya or liquor. Three kinds of liquor are particularly commended in the *Mahanirvana Tantra*: those made from molasses, rice or Madhuka flower. Wine made from molasses is called Gaudi; that made from rice is called Paishti and that from Madhuka flower, Madhvi. In the absence of these standard types of liquor, any intoxicating drink would serve the purpose, and in South India arrack made of palm wine is the most commonly used Madya in Tantric worship.

Before pouring the wine, the jar should be decorated with vermilion, sandal paste and a garland of crimson flowers. And while pouring liquor into the jar so adorned, the Mantra, "Hring! Shring! Kring! Paramesvari Svaha!" should be repeated. The wine must now be consecrated by performing the Panchikarana (fivefold) ceremony as under:

"Touch the jar with a wisp of Kusa grass, saying, 'Phut!'; then, uttering the Bija Mantra 'Hung', veil it by the Avagunthana Mudra (veil gesture); next, utter the Bija Mantra 'Hring', and look with unwinking eye upon the jar; then sprinkle water over the jar uttering the word 'Namah!'; lastly, repeating the Mula Mantra, 'Hring! Shring! Kring! Paramesvari! Svaha!' smell the wine in the jar three times." This ceremony turns wine into nectar.

Though the wine has now been turned into ambrosia, three traditional curses attached to liquor must be removed before it can be drunk. One was by the Brahmin Sukra, the preceptor of the Asuras, who inadvertently drank the ashes of his disciple Kacha in a bowl of wine and on coming to know of it cursed liquor; another curse was by the creator Brahma who, in a drunken state, committed incest with his daughter and, on regaining sobriety, cursed the cause of his sin; the third was by Krishna who, seeing that the whole race of Yadavas whose leader he was, perished in an internecine war started after heavy drinking, cursed liquor.*

The curse of Sukra is to be removed by the officiating priest throwing into the jar red flowers repeating the Mantra: "Aum! Ekam Eva Param Brahma! (Verily, Brahma one-without-a-second). By this I destroy the sin of killing a Brahmana which is attached to thee by reason of the death of Kacha."

This is followed by repeating the Hansa Mantra, "Hrim! the Hansa (swan) dwells in the pure sky," which removes the curse of Brahma.

Finally, to remove the curse of Krishna, the following Mantra is repeated: "Krang! Kring! Krung! Kraing! Kraung! Kra! Remove the curse of Krishna in the wind! Pour nectar again and again! Svaha!"

The wine is not yet fit for drinking. The officiating priest must now mediate upon Ananda Bhairava (a joyful form of Shiva) and his spouse Ananda Bhairavi as engaged in amorous sport in the jar, mentally repeating the following Mantra of the couple: "Ha! Sa! Ksha! Ma! La! Va! Ra! Yung, to Ananda Bhairava, Vashat"; and "Sa! Ha! Ksha! Ma! La! Va! Ra! Ying! To the Suddha Devi! Vaushat!"

* The stories of these curses will be found in the author's work, *Epics, Myths and Legends of India.*

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Then meditating upon the two deities as having union in the jar and filling it with the ambrosia of such union, Japa should be performed over the jar twelve times with the Mula Mantra, and then a handful of flowers should be offered to the couple resident in the jar.

Arati (an auspicious ceremony performed for removing all evil influences and granting prosperity generally) may now be performed by waving lights or incense sticks over the jar with the right hand, the left ringing a hand-bell. This completes all ceremonies connected with the consecration and purification of liquor.

Meat must now be purified. For this purpose, the vessel containing the cooked meat is placed in a triangular diagram or Mandala and water sprinkled over it by the priest uttering the Bija "Phut" once, and repeating thrice the Bijas of air (Vayu Bija: Yang) and of fire (Vahni Bija: Rang); the Avagunthana Mudra (veil gesture) is then shown over the vessel, the priest uttering the Bija "Hung" of Kavacha Mantra (armour Mantra), and the vessel is protected by the weapon Bija "Phut"; uttering the Bija of Varuna (Vang) and displaying the Dhenu Mudra (cow gesture) the meat is then turned into food for celestials by repeating the following Mantra: "May that goddess whose abode is in the breast of Vishnu and in the breast of Sankara purify this meat, and give me a resting place in the supreme abode of Vishnu."

Fish is consecrated by repeating the Mantra: "We worship Trayambika, sweet-scented increaser of nourishment. May he free us from the bond of death, just as the Urvaruka is detached from its stalk.* May he not cast us away from immortal life."

Consecration of gram is then done by repeating the following Mantra: "Aum! As is seen the round eye of heaven (the sun) spreading its rays on all sides, so worshippers ever see the abode of Vishnu. Brahmanas with firmly centred mind ever glorify the supreme abode of Vishnu."

All the four Tatvas are now purified and can be consumed. If time is short, it is not necessary to consecrate and purify each separately, but it is enough if the Mula Mantra is repeated over all the four together. Meat, fish and gram are known as Suddhi, their main object being to take away the taste of wine.

Before drinking starts, it is good to sacrifice an animal to the goddess.†

After these ceremonies are duly performed, Nivedya (anything offered to the deity, usually cooked or uncooked food) should be offered to the deity, after which the worshippers may partake of the Tatvas.

"Seating his Sakti to his left on a separate Pitha (seat) or on the same Pitha as himself‡ the worshipper should take a pleasing cup; the cup should be of a size that will hold not more than five and not less than three Tolas of wine (about two or three ounces); it may be made of gold, silver, crystal or coconut shell. The cups should be kept on a tripod on the right side of the plate containing Suddhi."

In serving, seniority is to be observed. As a rule, the host serves the Guru and his Sakti first; in certain circles the Sakti of the Guru is to be served first, in

* Urvaruka is a kind of melon which, when ripe, detaches itself from the stalk but does not decay and perish on that account.

† For the method of Tantric sacrifice, see Chapter 5.

‡ In certain circles, especially in those formed of Saktis other than Swiya, the Sakti is seated naked on the left thigh of the worshipper.

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others the Guru himself. When a Mahapatra or human skull is used as a cup, this should be filled in preference to all others. Some texts ordain that before drinking starts, it is necessary for the worshipper to take some Suddhi in order to "make a foundation. For drinking on an empty stomach would more strongly affect the worshipper and may render him unfit for worship." This ordinance is not, however, universally accepted. In Vishnukranta circles, for instance, the worshipper holds the cup of wine in the left hand and the Suddhi in the right, and, as he drinks, takes the Suddhi. With the first cup he takes meat, with the second fish, with the third gram, with the fourth all these and with the fifth anything he desires.

The *Mahanirvana Tantra* ordains that not more than five cups of wine must be drunk, after which Maithuna must take place.

From the foregoing it is clear that the partaking of the Tatvas is of a sacramental nature, and some texts and priests insist that the worshipper must have his senses completely under control and emotions well regulated. The reader may wonder how this is possible for a worshipper with a cup of wine in his right hand and a naked woman on his left thigh. Such calmness of mind in presence of nudity cannot be entirely ruled out as impossible. For as is well known, artists engrossed in their work can view live models of nudes from a purely aesthetic angle without exhibiting any emotion. Further, all things are possible to the gods.

Even Maithuna, it is laid down in certain texts, is to be performed in a detached sacramental sort of way. The Hindu passion for ritual and mysticism has to be taken into account in gauging the moral issues involved in Panchatatva worship. Even in ordinary normal human activities, the Brahmin looks for the mysterious, and in sex activities more so; sexual congress with one's own wife in the bedroom can be something of a ritual for the pious, and the *Mahanirvana Tantra* lays down the following rule for the correct method of approaching one's own wife:

"On the same night as a woman is cleansed of her menstrual impurity* or on even dates,† the husband should enter the bedroom with his wife and meditating on Prajapati (Brahma, the creator) should touch his bed and repeat the Mantra: 'Hrim ! O bed ! Be thou propitious for the begetting of good offspring of us twain.'

"The husband must now sit on the bed with his wife, facing east or north.‡ Then looking at his wife, let him embrace her with his left arm, and placing his right hand over her head let him do Japa (repetition of incantations) of the following Mantras over the different parts of her body:

"Over her head the Kama Bija, 'Kling', should be repeated a hundred times; over her chin the Vagbhava Bija, 'Aing', a hundred times; over the throat, the Rama Bija, 'Shring', twenty times; over each of the breasts, the Rama Bija, a hundred times; the Maya Bija, 'Hring', ten times over her heart, and twenty-five times over the navel.

"Next let him place his hand on her Yoni and recite jointly the Kama and Vagbhava Bijas a hundred and eight times, and let him similarly repeat the same Bijas one hundred and eight times holding his own Lingam. And then repeating the Bija 'Hrim' he may copulate with her with the object of begetting a child.

* The few days following the cessation of the menstrual flow is considered the Ritu or the fertile period in women by Hindu writers.

† Copulation on the first night after the cessation of the menstrual flow and on even dates counted from the first night is considered productive of sons and that on odd dates of daughters.

‡ West and south are considered inauspicious directions by the Hindus. West is the region of the setting sun and south the region of Yama, god of death.

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He should, at the time of discharging the seed, meditate on Brahma and recite the following Mantra: 'As the earth is pregnant of fire, heaven of Indra, and space of air, so do thou also become pregnant by this my seed.' "

EXCESSES AND ABUSES

While texts like *Mahanirvana Tantra* insist that the partaking of the Tatvas should be of a reverential nature, it cannot be said that all Tantric texts insist on restraint and composure of mind. In fact, the *Mahanirvana Tantra* explicitly states that its teaching is a departure from older traditions and it even mentions that it is better to use symbolical substances in place of the Tatvas, Kula flowers, etc. The reason given for this deviation is that as the Kali Yuga advances, restraint in Panchatatva worship is necessary, as otherwise Tantric rites might degenerate into orgies as the evil men of advancing Kali age would not know where to stop in the matter of drinking and Maithuna.

There are, however, scriptures that argue the other way, that is, to make the ritual attractive to the fallen, it is better to be liberal. In the *Matrika Bheda Tantra*, for instance, is an oft-quoted passage which extols the virtues of excessive drinking. In this text, Shiva thus explains to his wife the spiritual merits of wine: "O Sweet-speaking goddess! the salvation of Brahmins depends upon drinking wine. I impart to you a great truth when I say that the Brahmin, who devotes himself to drinking and its accompaniments, forthwith becomes Shiva himself. Even as water mixes with water, metal blends with metal, even as the confined space in a pitcher merges into the great body of the surrounding space on the destruction of the confining vessel, as air mingles with air so does that Brahmin melt into Brahma, the universal soul."* Again, "true knowledge can never be acquired without drinking liquor; therefore should Brahmins always drink. No one becomes a Brahmin by repeating the Gayatri, the mother of the Veda; he is called a Brahmin only when he has knowledge of Brahma. The ambrosia of the gods is the knowledge of Brahma, but here on earth it is arrack (liquor distilled from rice), and because one attains through it the condition of a god (Surata) therefore is liquor called Sura."†

In pursuance of these theories, certain Tantric cults of extreme views specialise in excessive drinking and communal Maithuna. In such orgies, the Saktis employed are courtesans and women of the low castes and of loose morals, as much because of the fixed creed of the cult as of the difficulty of getting other women; for it is one of the principles of practically all magic cults that men and women outside the pale of society better represent the anarchic forces in the universe than the conventional and the respectable. In some of the orgies, it was usual to engage a beautiful courtesan to represent the goddess, worship her from head to foot by appropriate Mantras, pour wine over her body and drink the wine so consecrated.

* There are Tantric commentators who maintain that the language used is highly symbolic, indicative of spiritual ecstasy obtained through the rousing of Kundalini (see Chapter 10); but it cannot be denied that certain people take this text as sanctioning the pleasures of inebriety. Many schools of Hindu Sanyasins consider the use of narcotics like opium, ganja and liquor as legitimate means of obtaining a state of mind conducive to spiritual ecstasy.

† This explanation has the support of other texts too. For gods are said to be addicted to the liquor called Sura, which was one of the products churned out of the milk ocean; on this account a god is called Sura. Their enemies, it is said, were called Asuras because these did not know the art of making Sura. In some measure, as we have already seen, the Tantrics may be said to be the followers of ancient Vedic practices, in which ritualistic drinking and eating the meat of acrificed animals formed an important part.

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A characteristic of the Tantric cult, mainly the result of its secrecy, is the desire on the part of its adherents to escape from the choking atmosphere of society into the anarchic freedom its sanctuary affords. In the more thorough going of the cults, the idea is carried to extremes, and anything society considers objectionable is held in high esteem, the more objectionable, the better. In certain Tantric cults of Buddhism, the zealots, in addition to many loathsome practices, used to indulge in the "killing of the Buddha," the most heinous sin a Buddhist can think of.

The practice of the Tantric Namadharis mentioned by the Abbe Dubois may be cited in this connection. "People of all castes from the Brahmin to the Pariah are invited to attend. When the company are assembled, all kinds of meat, including beef, are placed before the idol. Ample provision is also made of arrack, toddy and opium and any other intoxicating drug they can lay their hands on. The whole is then offered to Vishnu. Afterwards, the Pujari or sacrificer who is generally a Brahmin, first of all tastes the various kinds of meat and liquor himself, then gives the others permission to devour the rest. Men and women thereupon begin to eat greedily, the same piece of meat passing from mouth to mouth, each person taking a bite, until it is finished. Then they start on another joint which they gnaw in the same manner, tearing the meat out of each other's mouths. When all the meat has been consumed, intoxicating liquors are passed round, every one drinking without repugnance from the same cup. Opium and other drugs disappear in a similar fashion. They persuade themselves that under these circumstances, they do not contract impurity by eating and drinking in so revolting a manner. When they are all completely intoxicated, men and women no longer keep apart, but pass the rest of the night together, giving themselves up without restraint to the grossest immorality without any risk of disagreeable consequences. A husband who sees his wife in another man's arms cannot recall her, nor has he the right to complain; for at those times, every woman becomes common property. Perfect equality exists among all castes, and the Brahmin is not of higher caste than the Pariah. The celebration of these mysterious rites may differ sometimes in outward forms, but in spirit they are always equally abominable. Under certain circumstances, the principal objects which form the sacrifice to Sakti are a large vessel full of native rum and a full-grown girl. The latter, stark naked, remains standing in a most indecent manner. The goddess Sakti is evoked, and is supposed to respond to the invitation to come and take up her abode in the vessel full of rum and also in the girl's body."*

It is noteworthy that these Namadharis were outwardly Vaishnavas. Just as the Tantric cult had spread to Buddhism, it had infected practically all sects of Hindus, and each had invented its own rituals of sex-worship.

These extravagances arise out of certain peculiarities of Hinduism as a religion. There are not in Hinduism Pontiffs or hierarchs with effective organisations under them to check and eliminate errors in doctrine and practice. Once the authority of the *Vedas* is formally accepted, any person can promulgate his own views and found sects, and the liberty of interpretation is so great that even doctrines diametrically opposed to the teaching of the *Vedas* are accepted as orthodox. Further, there are no universally accepted dogmas in Hinduism and every one of those hundreds of units that form the loose conglomeration of peoples who go under the name of Hindus, is allowed to practise its own traditional observances however much these may offend the sentiments of the enlightened. Hence we find animism,

* Abbe Dubois, *Hindu Religion, Ceremonies, Customs and Manners.*

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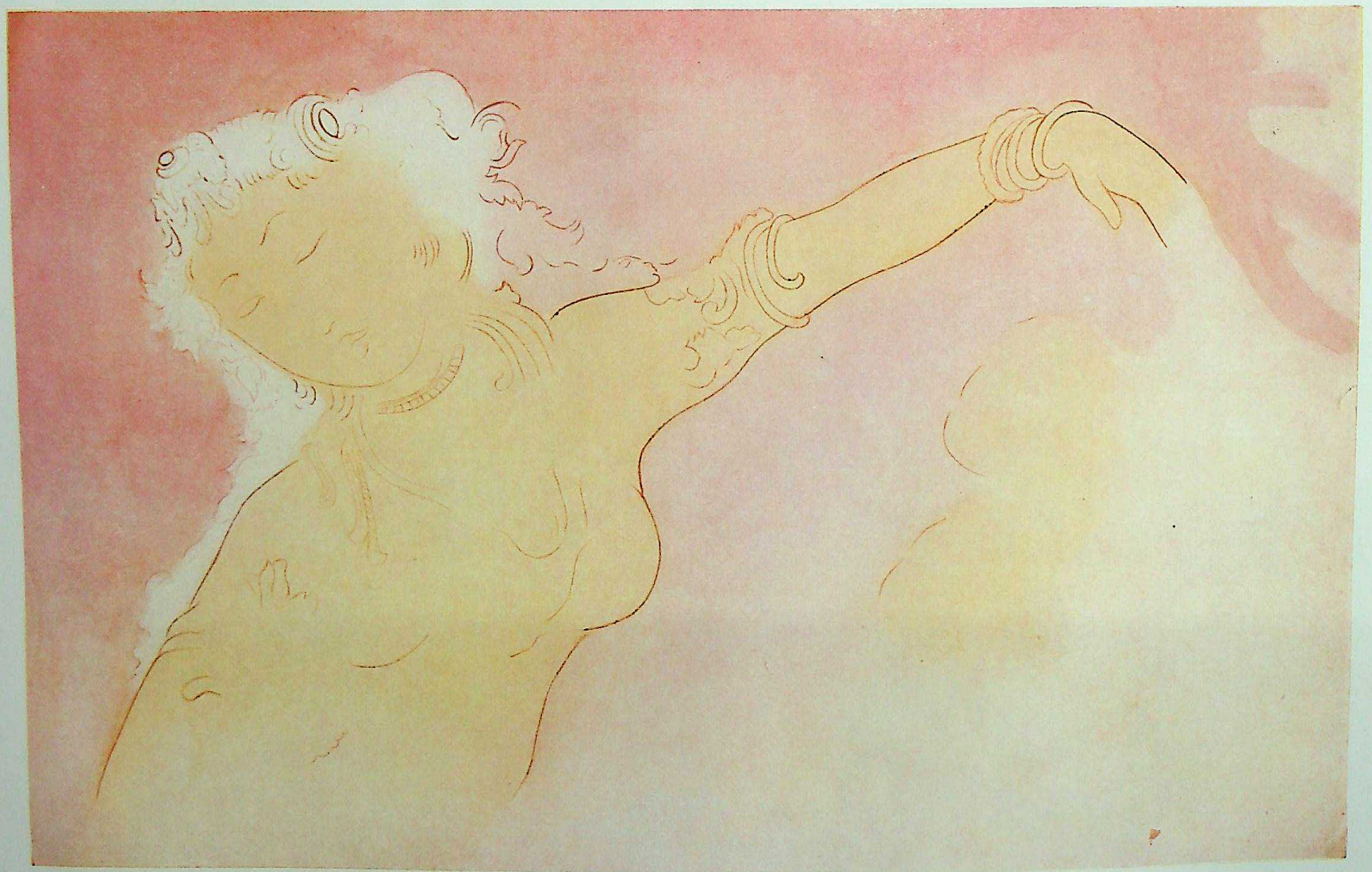
sacrifices, Ahimsa, asceticism, licentiousness, all appearing in Hinduism as orthodox. Philosophical Hinduism, while standing aloof, tolerates all these on the broad principle that all sincere religious beliefs and practices are but so many roads to the same goal, some straight, some circuitous and others long-winded. Crude beliefs such as animal and tree worship, are considered good enough for those who practise them, and stepping stones to higher wisdom.

Under these conditions it is easy for any practice to thrive in Hinduism. The Thugs, as we have seen, practised their nefarious trade in the name of Bhavani. Similarly, many Tantric scholars who were carnally inclined have been able to produce new revelations or interpolate existing ones in order to provide religious sanction for their own particular forms of debauchery; and scholarship, as is well known, is no guarantee against moral degeneration.

The best check Hinduism has been able to develop against excesses and abuses is enlightened public opinion; during the British period this led to various pieces of legislation which stopped practices like Sati, child-marriage, human sacrifice, etc., but in the case of the Tantric cult, enlightened public opinion has not been able to do much, because of the secrecy attached to the practices. The attitude of the Tantrics is that if others do not like their practices, they need not join them, and they put down the antagonism of the Pasus to their sins accumulated through evil deeds done in former lives.

Some of the Tantric sects, no doubt, harbour a large number of individuals who find the atmosphere of the society they live in choking and would, but for the solace the sanctuary affords, have sought the brothel or joined criminal gangs. But Tantric cults are not to be judged by the practices of these derelicts and delinquents, just as Hinduism is not to be judged by the practices of the Thugs or the Meriah sacrifices of the Khonds. In fact, regular Vamacharis are themselves bitterest critics of those who abuse the Tatvas. "O reader," warns the Tantric commentator Tarkalankara, "do not blame Kulachara on seeing these erring men (drunkards and libertines masquerading as Kaulas). A libertine and drunkard can never be a Kaula. On seeing a woman he sees his mother and Ishtadevata in her and in either mind or body makes obeisance to her. The saints Gauranga, Nityananda and Advaita are brilliant examples of the true Kaulas."

It must also be mentioned that Tantric literature is not solely devoted to drinking and Maithuna. The Panchatatva worship is only a part of it. A Tantra usually deals with all the subjects that form the main theme of a *Purana*, and the *Rudrayamala*, as we have seen, is a comprehensive work even greater in length than the *Mahabharata*. What Sir John Woodroffe says about Tantric literature and tradition is important in this connection. "Whatever we may think upon these matters, it will occur to every one of experience and free from prejudice, that there must be more in a Shastra which has obtained so great a credence and wide-spreading authority than the moral abuses and silly superstitions alone with which it is charged. From the purely objective and detached standpoint of the historian, the whole of the Shastra is of value and interest. Historical research in itself is not concerned with moral values. Its subject is whatever man has taught, said or done. When we consider, however, these values, the case is of course different. From the latter point of view the Tantra is an encyclopaediac amalgam of elements of varying character and worth, extending from the doctrine of a lofty speculation to practices which are, to the higher occultism, suspect and to prescriptions which may be used for evil-intentioned magic."



An Apsara. Fresco from Sittanavasal
(From N. C. Mehta's *Studies in Indian Painting*)

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THE ORIGIN AND EXTENT OF TANTRIC RELIGION

The Tantric cult is perhaps the most widely criticised of Hindu religious beliefs and practices; not only Europeans and Americans but many Indians belonging to other persuasions such as Shaivas, Vaishnavas and reformist sects like the Brahmo Samajists and Arya Samajists have condemned it in no unequivocal terms. Those Hindus who are partial to the ancient religion of the early *Vedas* maintain that the cult is of non-Aryan origin, grafted into Vedic religion by the indigenous peoples of India whom the Aryans conquered or by wild tribes who conquered the Aryan settlers from the north.

Though the Tantric cult has its roots in primitive sex-worship, its voluminous literature and elaborate ritualism are, no doubt, post-Vedic, like the Puranic religion with its emphasis on the worship of Shiva and Vishnu. In fact, the Saktas are reckoned along with Vaishnavas and Shaivas, as one of the main sects of Puranic Hinduism.

Whatever may be the Vedic attitude towards sex-worship, it certainly was not antagonistic to drinking and meat-eating. In Vedic rituals, as we have seen, ritualistic drinking of spirituous liquor and eating the meat of animals sacrificed according to prescribed rites formed an important part, and it was against these practices that Buddhism and Jainism revolted. Under the influence of these religions and later of Vaishnavism, vegetarianism and teetotalism became respectable among the Hindus, and those who considered that there was virtue in meat and wine found it difficult to practise their rituals in public, and were, perhaps, obliged to go underground.

Nor is the contention of those who attribute the cult to northern origin entirely without foundation. The wild tribes that invaded India from the time of the collapse of the Mauryan Empire till the Muslim conquest were many, and some of them had strange beliefs and cults. When they accepted Hinduism or Buddhism, most of their gods and rituals were incorporated in these religions. As in Hinduism, Tantric rituals occupied a prominent place in Northern Buddhism, known as Mahayana, the rise of which is attributed to the Central Asian hordes that invaded and settled down in India in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Tantric works known as *Neela Tantra* and *China-Achara* would indicate the prevalence of foreign elements in Tantric rituals. The fact that north-eastern India was the main stronghold of Tantric cults also lends considerable support to the view that foreign elements dominated Tantric worship as this region was mainly peopled by races of Tibeto-Burman extraction.

Anyway, the Tantric cult, like Hinduism itself, is a synthesis of diverse beliefs and practices and is essentially Indian in its religious character.

The Hindu scriptures have a legend about the origin of the Tantric cult. After the self-immolation of Sati (see Chapter 8) Shiva took the charred body of his spouse and, stricken with grief, started dancing like a demented creature. The wild rhythm of the leaping god shook the universe, and the celestials, fearing that the worlds would come to a premature end supplicated Vishnu the Preserver; this god took his flaming discus and cut the body of Sati into fifty pieces all of which fell to the earth, and on each rose a temple. The Yoni of Sati fell in Assam and the famous Kamakhya temple there is believed to enshrine the relic; the Tantric cult is said to have spread from this centre.

Though the origin of the Tantric cult is generally associated with Assam and

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Bengal, it was widely prevalent in other parts of India too. Tantric rituals dominated Hinduism in medieval India and many temples which were apparently dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu or the sun-god Surya were in reality Tantric shrines as the exuberant erotic art of these temples would indicate. It is one of the fixed tenets of Tantric religion that its adherents should, to all outward appearances, conform to the formalities of Shaivism, Vaishnavism or Surya-worship and keep their religion a guarded secret. "The Kaula should hide his cult as the coconut hides its water," is the general injunction. The Kaula cult is compared to a noble lady who discloses her charms in secret to her husband only while the public worship of other sects is likened to prostitutes of promiscuous habits, who give themselves to all and sundry. Such being the case, the Tantrics took care to ostensibly dedicate their temples to any deity but Sakti, and practise their true religion in nocturnal rites unknown to the public.

When Indian religion and culture were transplanted into Cambodia, Champa, Java, Sumatra and other regions of South-East Asia, Tantric cults also found their way to these Indian colonies. During the Hindu phase of the cultural development of these countries, Tantric cults held an honoured place, and in the cult of the Royal God prevalent in Cambodia, Champa and Java, kings claimed to become gods through sexual communion with beautiful women converted into Sakti through mysterious rites. When Buddhism was introduced into these regions, Tantric rites dominated the Shiva-Buddha cult.*

In Tibet, the Tantric cult became the central doctrine and dogma of Lamaism. This branch of Buddhism was founded by the Indian missionary Padmasambhava who visited Tibet in the eighth century of the Christian era; Padmasambhava had drunk deep of Tantric lore in East India, and in Tibet he found a congenial soil for transplanting Tantric Buddhism as the indigenous Bon religion was dominated by magic and perhaps by sex-worship. Tantric Lamaism was further strengthened by the arrival in Tibet of another Indian missionary, Atisa, in the eleventh century of the Christian era. Atisa was the founder of a thorough-going Tantric school called Kalachakra which he popularised in East India and Burma first and then in Tibet. The cult flourished exceedingly in Tibet; the Yab-yum (father-mother) figure, the counterpart of the Maithuna figure of Hinduism, is a prominent feature of Tibetan iconography and sex-symbolism, the dominant note of its sacred literature. In Burma, however, Tantric cults did not make much headway because of the spread of Hinayana Buddhism in this region and Siam from Ceylon.

From Tibet the Tantric cult spread to Mongolia, and with the conquest of China and other Asiatic countries by the Mongols, the Tantric religion got a stronghold on the major part of Asia. It is significant that one of the rites in Indian Tantric literature is known as Maha-China-Achara (practice of the Great China); in China, however, excepting in certain Lamaistic establishments, Tantric cults did not find favour. As a rule, China, Korea and Japan, which professed Mahayana Buddhism, kept out of the Tantric circle.

Hinayana Buddhism (Asokan Buddhism, also known as the Southern School) likewise persistently shut out all Tantric influences. Ceylon where the school flourished from the time of Mahendra, Asoka's missionary, persistently resisted all infiltration of Tantric influences and Sinhalese contact was mainly responsible for the elimination of Tantric influences from the Buddhism of Burma and Siam.

* For details of the religion of Indian colonies of South-East Asia, see the author's work, *The Story of the Cultural Empire of India.*

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In India, Bengal and Assam are even now the main strongholds of the Sakti cult. Secret nocturnal rituals are still the dominant note of the Vamachara cult. Because of the duplicity practised by the Tantrics, it is difficult to ascertain their real strength and there is no doubt that a large number of Hindus who outwardly profess to be Shaivas or Vaishnavas are in reality Vamacharis. I personally know many Brahmins who outwardly profess to be vegetarians but indulge in wine and meat; some of the scrupulous, however, take care to remove their sacred threads during this indulgence, as without the sacred thread they are not to be considered Brahmins. Besides, every sin has its expiatory rite.

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10. Rousing Kundalini Sakti

A MYSTERIOUS discipline known as "rousing Kundalini," by means of Hatha Yoga (body and breath control), is one of the most important teachings of the Tantrics. The discipline can be practised only under the guidance of an adept; the system involves a rigorous strain on the physical and mental faculties of the trainee and many an amateur who indulged in it out of curiosity or for any other reason, without the guidance of a competent Guru, has come to woe. Hence the attempt made here is to give the reader a general idea of the practice and the theory behind it, and not to initiate him into the mysteries of Kundalini.

To understand this discipline it is necessary for the reader to have some idea of the Tantric conception of the human body and mind. A human being is, according to Tantric teachings, the microcosm (Kshudra-Brahmanda) of the physical, occult and spiritual forces that operate in the Brahmanda or cosmos. As a Tantric text pithily puts it, "whatever is in man is everywhere, and what is not in man is nowhere." All the cosmic forces we see outside us do also operate in man, some explicitly, others insidiously, while still others lie dormant which, when roused, endow man with superhuman powers. Ordinary human beings are only partially aware of their potentialities, and of certain forces in them they are even totally ignorant. In other words, an ordinary human being is only partly alive and is innocent of the vast forces that lie latent in him.

Tantric literature describes the human body as a miniature universe. The Meru hill that supports the universe (see Chaptre 1) is, in the human microcosm, the vertebral column. The seven upper worlds rise above the Muladhara, situated at the pubic region, and the nether worlds are below it. The Nadis or veins represent rivers, and sweat and tears, the oceans. As the worlds are supported by Vayus or airs, so the human body has its vital airs. The soul is identical with the Parama Atman or the supreme soul that sustains the universe. We need not go into further details of the Tantric conception of the human system in relation to the cosmos, but suffice to say that the primal male and female principles, the union of which is considered the source of cosmic dynamics, are in man too. The female principle or Sakti is in a centre called Muladhara, in shape like an inverted triangle, situated between the base of the pubic region and the anus; this Sakti is called Kundali or Kundalini, meaning coiled, because in her dormant position she lies coiled like a serpent.

The position of the lord of this Sakti, Shiva or the Lingam, is in the head of a man, in a centre called Sahasrara or "thousand-petalled," in shape like a lotus flower. The burden of Hatha Yoga, as practised by Tantrics, is to rouse the dormant Kundalini, lead her through the vertebral column to Shiva in Sahasrara, make her embrace her lord and "cause the nectar of the union flow into the system of the

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worshipper," which makes him experience the ecstasy of Paradise. After the union, the Sakti can be led back to her normal position in Muladhara, and an adept is thought to be able to rouse her as often as he wants and experience supreme bliss. A man who is able to do this not only enjoys "Ananda" or bliss but claims the power of performing miracles such as "entering the body of another person, of transmuting metals, of healing the sick of incurable diseases, of clairvoyance, of darting through space and of retaining, if so desired, youth for a thousand years."

The Kundalini Yoga has nothing sexual or emotional about it except the language. Though the written teachings are replete with sexual symbolism as all Tantric literature is, the discipline itself is hard and tortuous, lasting for several years, and the trainee has to deny himself many pleasures in order to be able to control Kundalini and enjoy the ecstasy she affords. For though the distance between Muladhara and Sahasrara is short in a physical sense, the path of Kundalini is beset with many pitfalls, and the unwary who rouse the goddess without proper guidance may, instead of enjoying the pleasures of Paradise, contract incurable diseases or end up in a premature grave. The main resistance to Kundalini's progress towards her lord is offered by centres called Chakras, six in number, including the Muladhara. These Chakras are situated in a path called Brahmandhra that runs along the vertebral column connecting the Muladhara to Sahasrara, and are like eddies that arrest the smooth passage of a boat in a river or like trap-doors in which the unwary may get caught.

Because of the need for overcoming these six Chakras, Kundalini Yoga is also known as Shad-Chakra-Bheda or the Piercing of the Six Chakras.

Each Chakra, it may be mentioned, has certain vital airs peculiar to it, Mantras and deities resident in it with their Yantras, certain mystic flowers, and Tatvas or elements, all presided over by a goddess of forbidding mien. It will not be profitable for the general reader to go into the details of the intricate mechanism and mystic forces that work a Chakra, but an aquaintance with the salient features of each Chakra and the method of Kundalini's progress through them will be desirable.

The Muladhara is the first Chakra. The term means "root support." As already stated, it is the bed of Kundalini, is in shape like an inverted triangle, and is situated between the base of the pubic region and the anus. In the Muladhara is a red lotus of four petals. "In the centre of this lotus is a Swayambhu Lingam, ruddy brown, like the colour of a young leaf, and Kundalini, 'more subtle than the fibre of the lotus and luminous as lightning,' lies asleep coiled, like a serpent, round the Lingam and closes with her body the door, or the Brahmadvara through which she has to ascend." The most important of the vital airs in Muladhara is known as Kandarpa Vayu. Guarding the Chakra are also Brahma, the creator, and his wife Sarasvati or Savitri, while the goddess Prithvi or earth is resident in it, riding on an elephant. Earth is the Tatva or element of the Muladhara and its presiding deity is the red, fearsome, four-armed goddess Dakini.

The second Chakra is called Svadhisthana and is in shape like a lotus of six petals. The Chakra is situated above the Muladhara and below the navel. The pericarp of the lotus is red and its petals are like tongues of lightning. Varuna, the god of the sea, is resident in the Chakra, and he sits on a white alligator on a crescent. Water evolved from fire is the Tatva of the Chakra. Its Mantra is "Vam," the Bija of Varuna. Its presiding deity is the four-armed, blue Rakini.

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Manipura, the third Chakra, is so called because it emits rays like a gem (Mani). Fire evolved from air is the element of the Chakra and its Bija is "Ram". The Chakra is a ten-petalled lotus of golden colour. Rudra and his Sakti Bhadra Kali are resident in the Chakra. The presiding deity of Manipura is the four-armed Lakini "of the colour of molten gold, wearing yellow raiments and ornaments. Her mind is maddened with passion." Manipura is situated above Svadhisthana in the region of the navel.

The fourth Chakra is known as Anahata. It is a lotus of twelve petals of a deep red colour, and is situated above Manipura Chakra, about the region of the heart. In Anahata are Isvara (a form of Shiva) and his Sakti Bhuvanesvari with several other attendant celestials. The element of the Chakra is Vayu or air evolved from ether, and the wind-god, seated on a black antelope, and his Bija "Yam" are in the Chakra. Its presiding goddess is the three-eyed Kakini, lustrous as lightning, with four hands "holding the noose, drinking cup, and showing the signs of blessing and of dispelling fear"; she wears a garland of human bones, and is intoxicated with the liquor she has drunk.

Visuddha, the fifth Chakra, is also known as Bharatisthana or the abode of Bharati, the goddess of speech. The Chakra is described as a lotus of sixteen petals situated above Anahata in the region of the throat. In the petals of the lotus are the vowels of the alphabet, the seven musical notes of the Saptak (as the octave is known in India). The form of Shiva known as Ardhanarisvara (a bisexual figure representing Shiva and his Sakti) is resident in the Chakra; its dominant element is ether, and the god of the firmament, mounted on his white elephant, is in the Chakra with his Bija, "Ham". The white Sakini is the presiding goddess of the Chakra; she is dressed in white. Sakini has four hands in which she holds a bow, an arrow, a noose and a hook.

Some *Tantras* mention a hidden Chakra near Visuddha, known as Kala Chakra; but this seems an innovation, the orthodox conception being that the Chakras are six.

The sixth Chakra is called Ajna; it is said to be a two-petalled lotus situated in the brow between the eyes. It has no element as such (according to Hindu religious conceptions, there are only five elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether) as all the five elements are in the lower Chakras. The celebrated Mantra "Aum" is, however, in the pericarp of the Ajna lotus. The members of the Trinity are resident in the Chakra as also Parasiva (a form of Shiva) with his Sakti, Siddha Kali. The presiding deity of the Chakra is the white Hakini possessing six heads and four hands; in three hands she holds a skull, a drum and a rosary, while with the fourth she shows the Jnana Mudra or gesture of knowledge (with the first finger uplifted, and the others closed).

Above Ajna are concealed two subsidiary Chakras known as Manas and Soma. There are also certain other mystic regions above Ajna, but we need not stop here to describe these and their complicated working. Suffice to say that above all these is the Sahasrara Padma or thousand-petalled lotus of variegated hues. "This is the region of the First Cause (Brahmaloka, the highest heaven in Hindu religious cosmology), the cause of the six preceding causes . . . . In each of the petals of the Sahasrara Padma are placed, all the letters of the alphabet, and whatever there is in the lower Chakras or in the macrocosm (Brahmanda) exists here in potential states (Avyaktabhava); Shaivas call this place Shiva Sthana. Vaishnavas Parama Purusha, Saktas Devi Sthana, the Sankhyas Prakriti-Purusha

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Sthana. Others call it by other names such as Hari-Hara Sthana, Sakti Sthana. Parama Brhama, Parama Hamsa, Parama Jyotih, Kula Sthana, Parama Siva Akula. But whatever the name, all speak of the same."*

The process of rousing and leading Kundalini to Sahasrara Padma may now be described. Normally all the lotuses of the Chakras are in a drooping state, with their petals closed and hanging downward from the stalk. The adept, by his skill in Yoga, agitates the vital air called Kandarpa Vayu in the Muladhara Chakra which kindles a brand at the base of the Swayambhu Lingam, and the heat thus produced wakes up the sleeping Kundalini. She now raises her head which opens the doorway called Brahmadvara that leads to the passage to Sahasrara. The energy generated by the movement of Kundalini forces open the drooping lotus which now rises upward. Aided by this momentum, Kundalini, absorbing all the deities, vital airs, element, in fact, all the mystic and physical forces operating in the Muladhara, rises and floats to the second Chakra Svadhisthana. As the goddess leaves Muladhara and enters Svadhisthana, the lotus of the former droops into its normal position, while the vitalised lotus of Svadhisthana opens to receive Kundalini and, on her entrance, rises; the goddess then absorbing all that is in Svadhisthana forces her way to Manipura. On the goddess leaving the second Chakra, the lotus in the Chakra droops and assumes its normal position.

While the first two Chakras are easily pierced, Manipura offers considerable resistance to the progress of Kundalini and the inexperienced often come to woe here. The Chakra is also known as Brahma Grandhi or knot of Brahma, and no attempt is to be made to pierce it without the guidance of a competent Guru; for the discipline here involves "considerable pain, physical disorder and even disease."

Anyway, those who are able to pierce the Chakra may lead Kundalini to Anahata through the normal channel. For people whose Manipura completely blocks the passage of Kundalini, there are rigorous courses of discipline by which the Guru may enable them to lead Kundalini from Svadhisthana to Anahata, by-passing Manipura.

Once Manipura is passed, the progress of Kundalini through Anahata and Ajna is comparatively easy; the lotuses of these Chakras open out on the entrance of Kundalini and she, absorbing the essence of these Chakras, floats above Ajna, and the lotuses of Anahata and Ajna droop.

The need for a Guru ceases at this point. The trainee who has learnt the art of leading Kundalini above Ajna has undergone years of training and has mastered practically all that has to be learned from another; he has now attained the stature of a Guru himself and is even competent to propound his own systems of Yoga, based on the experience he has gained.

Further, once Kundalini has been led up the Ajna lotus, she proceeds upwards without conscious effort on the part of the Yogi. On reaching Sahasrara, the goddess enjoys Maithuna with her lord, and "the nectar that flows from the union floods the Kshudra Brahmanda or human body. It is then that the Sadhaka, forgetful of all in this world is immersed in ineffable bliss."

The Sadhaka has now drunk deep of the mystic knowledge the science affords. He has now attained most of what a human being can. The leading of Kundalini back to Muladhara is a comparatively easy matter; as the goddess descends to Muladhara, she discharges into each Chakra all that she had absorbed from it and leaves it as before. On reaching Muladhara she reverts to her dormant position.

* Arthur Avalon, *Introduction to Tantra.*

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An adept is believed to be capable of rousing Kundalini as often as he desires and enjoy the bliss it affords. The often misquoted Tantric text that exhorts its adherents "to drink, drink, drink again till you fall on the ground; then rise up and again drink" (see Chapter 9), is said to be the mystic language in which the need for rousing Kundalini again and again to drink the bliss of Paradise is emphasized.

The adept in Kundalini Yoga, in addition to immersing himself in bliss, is said to have attained the eight Siddhis (occult powers), namely: Anima, Mahima, Laghima, Garima, Prapti, Prakamya, Isitva and Vasitva (the power of becoming small, great, light, heavy, etc., and the consequent ability to dart through space, float in air, delve into the nether regions, obtain magical powers, and the like). All these, however fascinating they may be to the ordinary run of mankind, are said to be lesser Siddhis, the main Siddhi being that of union with the Infinite which is the greatest Siddhi and the end of life.

YOGA GENERALLY

From the foregoing it is clear that Tantric rituals and discipline are not confined to mere nocturnal orgies; whatever the abuses of the cult by those who are carnally inclined, some of its esoteric disciplines have drawn forth the admiration of the greatest saints of Hinduism.

The Tantric religion, like all branches of orthodox Hinduism, caters to the needs of all, in accordance with the general Indian notion that souls are in different stages of development and what is good for one is not necessarily good for another. Hence, Tantric texts recognize several Acharas or practices, exoteric and esoteric, like Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Dakshinamarga, etc., which ultimately lead to Kulachara or the highest Tantric wisdom. All these Acharas may not be possible for an individual in one life; patience is the keynote of all Indian theories of deliverance, and the experience gained in various lives, possibly thousands in several planes, may be necessary before an individual is perfected and finally released from the bondage to life.

Yoga Achara is one of these disciplines that lead to perfection. This is perhaps the best known of the Hindu Acharas in the West, and Tantrics have contributed not a little towards perfecting the Hatha Yoga branch of the general discipline; hence a word may here be said about Yoga in general and Hatha Yoga in particular.

The word "Yoga" is derived from the Sanskrit root "Yuj" meaning "to join," and the ultimate aim of Yoga is the union of the individual soul with Atman or the universal soul. Any discipline directed towards this end is Yoga, in its wider sense. The man who practises devotion in order to obtain liberation is a Yogi; similarly the soldier who fights in the battlefield with a sense of duty is also a Yogi, since his action is devoted to a good end. Though Yoga thus may be any activity or inactivity directed towards a good end, in its particular meaning it refers to certain orthodox practices ordained by Hindu sages for obtaining composure of mind, well-being of body, occult or spiritual powers, and ultimate union with the infinite.

The orthodox schools of Yoga are seven but these schools fall into two main divisions known as Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga. These different schools are not antagonistic to one another; if anything they are complementary, though there are teachers who are inclined to treat one or the other with scant respect.

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98. HEVAJRA AND SAKTI
Tantric deities are usually represented as dual
(*From* Bengal. 12th century A.D. Nahar Collection, Calcutta)

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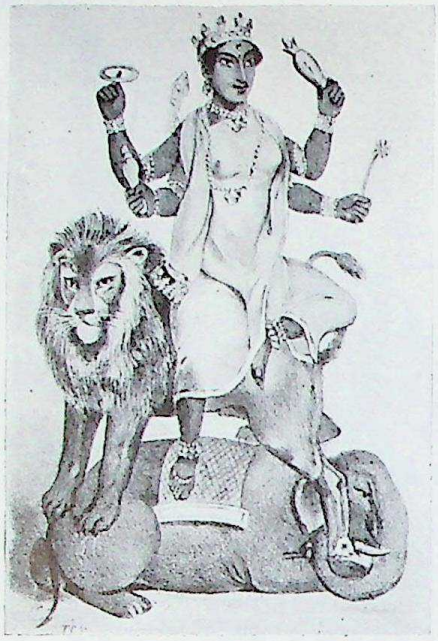

99. DURGA AS JAGADATRI OR MOTHER OF THE UNIVERSE
(*From* Coleman's *The Mythology of the Hindus*)

100. BHAIRAV. A TERROR ASPECT OF SHIVA
(*From* Khatmandu. *Photo*: Tibor Sekelj)

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101. VIRABHADRA. ANOTHER TERROR INSPIRING FORM OF SHIVA
(*From* Ellora. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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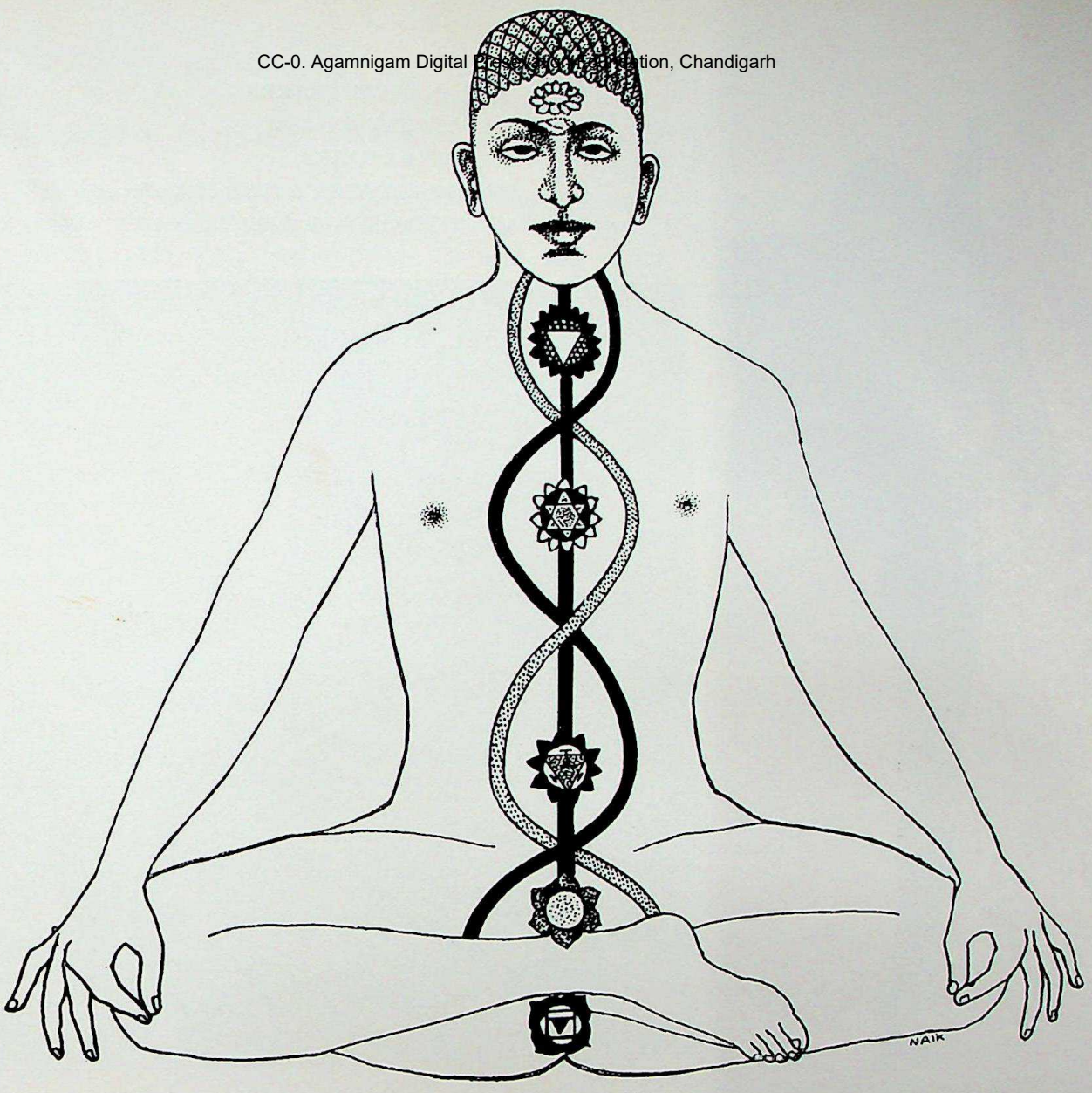

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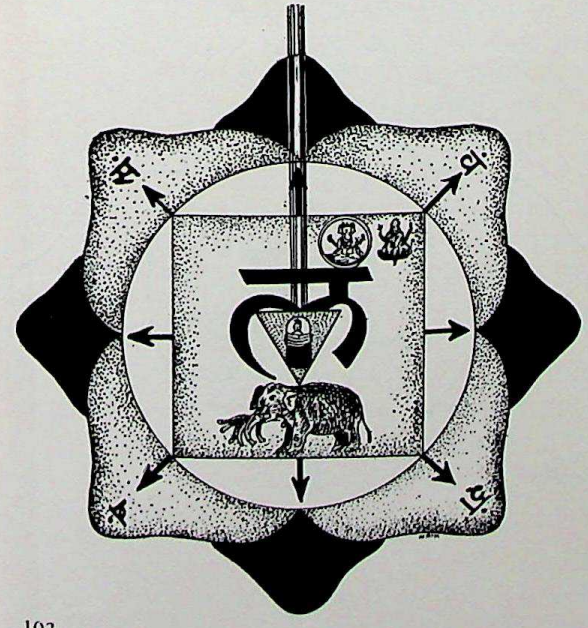
102. THE SIX CHAKRAS OR MYSTIC CENTRES IN THE HUMAN BODY

103. MULADHARA CHAKRA
104. SVADHISTHANA CHAKRA
105. MANIPURA CHAKRA



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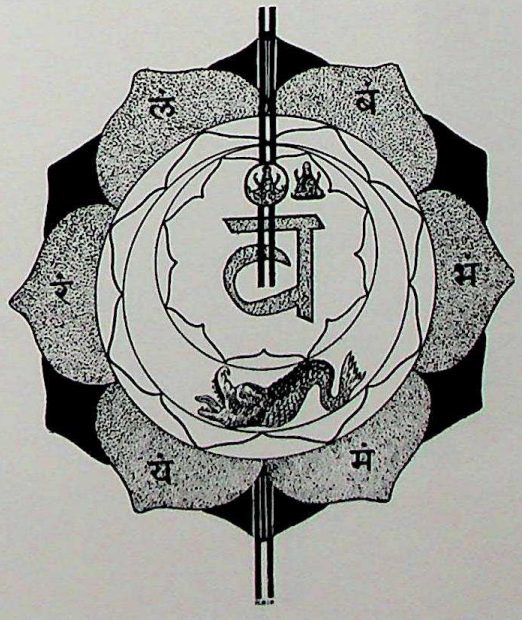

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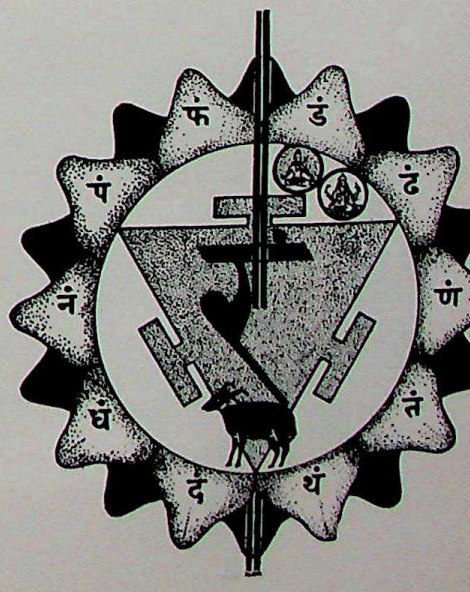

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106. ANAHATA CHAKRA
107. VISUDHI CHAKRA
108. AJNA CHAKRA
109. BHAGIRATHA ASANA (Yogic Posture)
110. PINDA ASANA (Yogic Posture)

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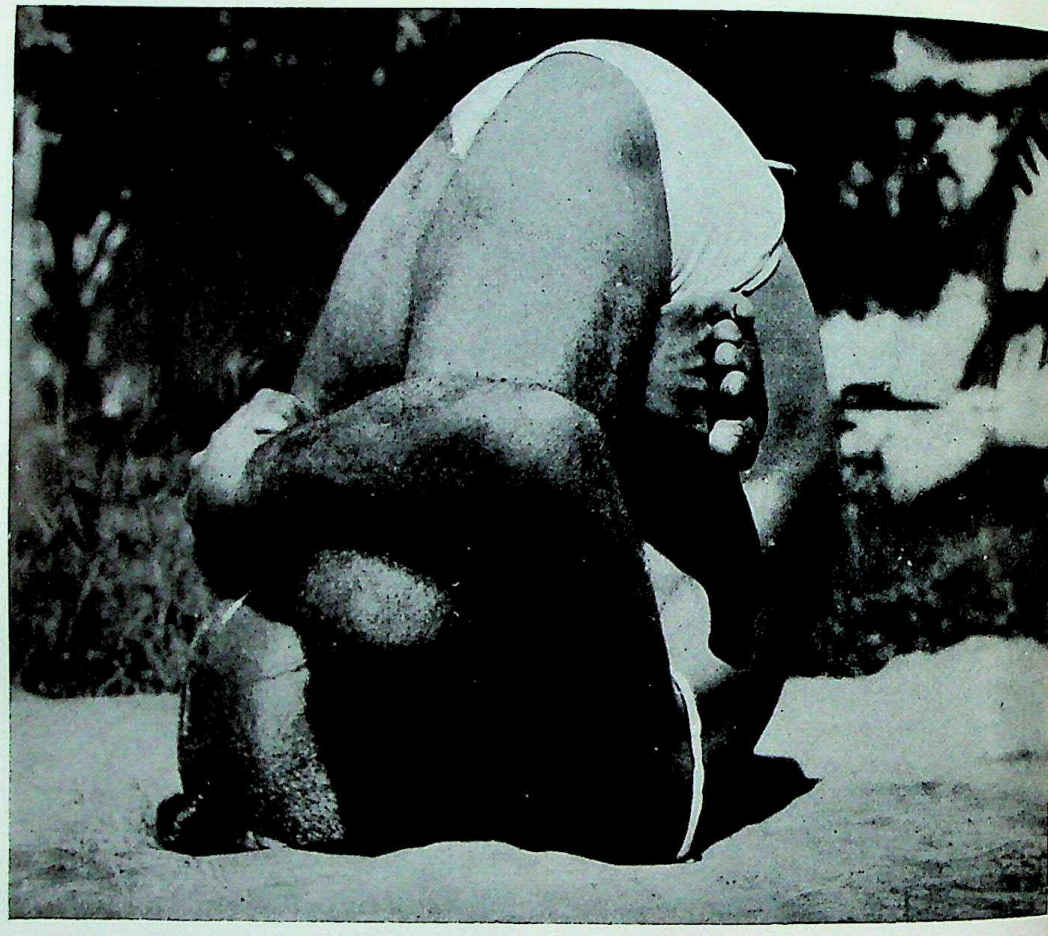

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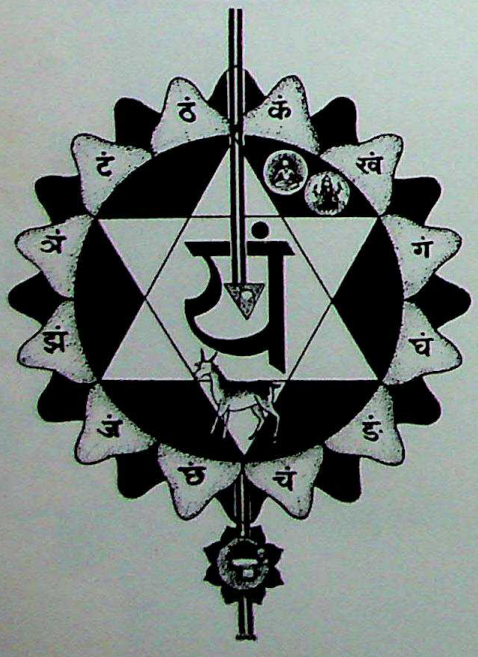

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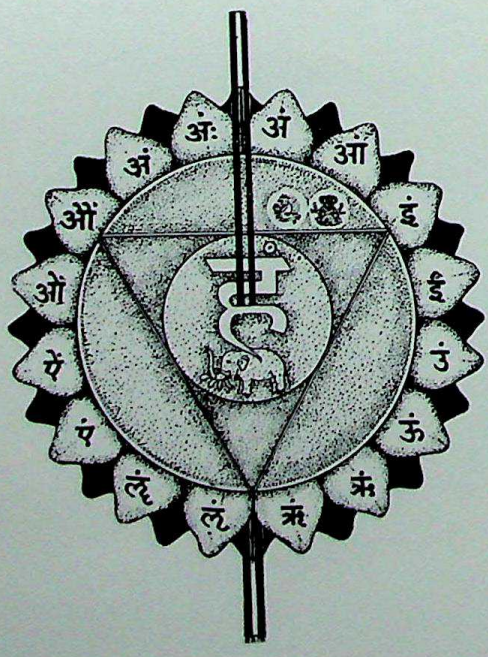

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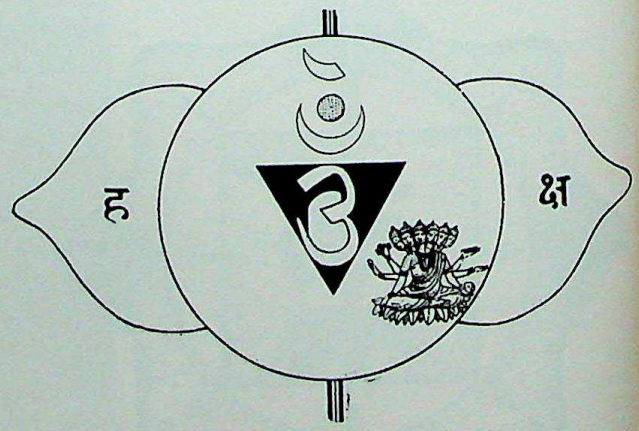

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Raja Yoga (Royal Yoga) is so called because a man becomes through its practice, the king of his faculties, while "Ha-Tha" Yoga takes its name from the incoming and outgoing breaths (*ha* and *tha*) which form part of its discipline. The Tantric schools specialise in Hatha Yoga, especially that branch of it which emphasises the importance of breathing and postures and the attainment of occult powers through body and mind training. While Raja Yoga aims at disciplining and cultivating the mind which, in turn, is believed to be capable of influencing the body in the performance of its functions properly, Tantric Hatha Yoga gives greater importance to the training of the body, its outward and inward purification and on influencing the mind through the body.

The particular branch of Hatha Yoga that specialises in rousing Kundalini is known as Laya Yoga. According to the philosophy of this discipline, mind is the lord of the senses, breath is the essence of mind, and Nada or sound is the base of breath. Though thus the philosophy would appear to be highly idealistic the practical teaching of Laya Yoga is mainly concerned with the mechanism of the body which has to be controlled, and even contorted, to develop the breath and sound forces believed to be concentrated in man.

As such, Laya Yoga involves a rigorous and austere course of body and breath training by means of breathing exercises, muscle control, postures and Mudras. One favourite Asana or posture for rousing Kundalini is "by supporting the body on the palms of the hands, striking the posteriors on the ground, which is also said to remove wrinkles and grey hair, although for the time being, the body obtains a death-like appearance. In another, very highly recommended, the membrane under the tongue is gradually cut (one hair's breadth in every seven days) and rubbed with salt and turmeric, so that the severed parts will not join. The tongue is also gradually lengthened by a process resembling milking, so that after six months, the Yogi can turn it upwards into the cavity at the back of the palate, and thus with the hole closed and the breath suspended, contemplate Kundalini, and 'drink the nectar' flowing there. Another physical method requires the manipulation of the region where Kundalini resides, for an hour and a half, morning and evening for up to forty-five days. Another practice is to contract and dilate the anal aperture again and again; and still another requires both feet to be crossed behind the neck. Some of the books prescribe an 'elephant Mudra' which is performed by standing upto the neck in water, drinking in through the nostrils, sending it out through the mouth and then reversing the process. This resembles the action of elephants in the pools and rivers, though they use the trunk only, not the mouth."* Cleansing the system by means of water drunk and ejected, or air taken into the belly and then let out is another form of discipline; some of these cleansing processes are Vasti "in which the Yogi sits in Utkatasana posture in water upto the navel, and the anus is contracted and expanded by Asvini Mudra and the abdomen below the navel is gently moved, and Neti, in which the nostrils are cleansed with a piece of string. Lauliki is the whirling of the belly from side to side. In Trataka, the Yogi, without winking, gazes at some minute object until the tears start from his eyes. By this the celestial vision, so often referred to in the *Tantrika Upasana*, is acquired. Kapalabhati is a process for the removal of phlegm and is threefold—Vatkrama by inhalation and exhalation, Vyutkrama by water drawn through the nostrils and ejected through the mouth, and Sitkrama, the reverse process.

* Ernest Wood, *The Occult Training of the Hindus.*

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"These are the various processes by which the body is cleansed and made pure for the Yoga practice to follow."*

Developing the Nadas or sound forces is just as tortuous. The *Shiva Samhita* instructs the Yogi "to close the ears with the thumbs, the eyes with the index fingers, the nostrils with the middle fingers and the lips with the remaining four fingers. After some practice he will begin to hear the mystic sounds. The first will be like the hum of a bee, then a flute and then a Vina. With more practice, there comes the sound of bells and afterwards thunder. The mind of the Yogi becomes absorbed in these sounds, and he forgets the external things which could distract him. These sounds are usually called Anahata or belonging to that Chakra situated in the heart centre." Different texts mention the order of the mystic sounds in different ways, some maintaining that the cruder sounds come first, while others say that the finer ones precede the noisy. But all agree that Nada Laya or absorption through sound is conducive to the higher form of the Yoga and absorption in the Atman.

We need not here dwell at greater length on Yoga as there are a large number of books dealing with the subject, both its practice and theory, and the curious are recommended to read one of these. We may, however, mention some of the remarkable results achieved through Hatha Yoga practices. Though many of the powers claimed for the Yogis such as the ability to dart through space, penetrate solid walls, etc., may be exaggerations, there is no doubt that a Yogi can do extraordinary things. He can certainly stop breathing for a long time; there is the historic case of a Yogi who remained buried for weeks under the vigilant supervision of Mahrajah Ranjit Singh, and started breathing when he was taken out. Even a casual observer in an Indian city can come across, at present, performing Yogis who lie buried for hours. Similarly, minor Yogis give public performances of stopping the heart and pumping it again at will. The greater Yogis, however, consider this as an abuse of the esoteric science, and insist that Yoga training should only be directed towards attaining spiritual bliss and union with the Atman.

Anyway, there is no doubt that Hatha Yoga gives the adept remarkable control over the sympathetic nervous system which, in ordinary men and women, work involuntarily.†

* Ernest Wood, *The Occult Training of the Hindus.*

† The late Dr. V. G. Rele, an allopathic physician who practised Hatha Yoga, has given certain scientific explanations for the feats Yogis are capable of performing, and readers interested in Laya Yoga and Kundalini discipline are recommended to read his book, *The Mysterious Kundalini.*

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11. The Bhakti Cult

IN THE preceding chapters we have dealt with the static and dynamic aspects of sex as conceived in Hindu mysticism. The worship of the Lingam, as we have seen, is linked with intellectual Shaivism, and of Sakti with power cults. Even Maithuna, according to strict Tantric codes, is to be performed as a sacrament and a duty, and should be divorced from all emotions.

The Shaivas and Saktas form distinct sects among the Hindus;* the higher conception of the deity in these sects is either as pure abstraction or overwhelming energy or power; the idea of a god of love, grace and mercy is sadly lacking in both. There are no doubt eulogies of Shiva as a benefactor and grantor of boons, and of Sakti as the Divine Mother, but these are subordinate to the intellectual and power aspects of these deities, and for all practical purposes godhead in these sects remains either a remote inert principle or the inexhaustible reservoir of all-devouring power.

But man cannot live by power and thought alone. The yearning for a humane loving god of mercy and grace, a Being whom benighted humanity could seek for light and guidance became a crying need in Hinduism, and to meet this arose the Vaishnava movement. It is significant that the idea rose rather late in Hinduism, after, in fact, the tenets of Christianity and Islam had become familiar to India.

The first important exponent of the new doctrine was Ramanuja, a South Indian Brahmin who lived in the twelfth century of the Christian era. At the time, Shaivism, as taught by Sankara, was the dominant form of Hinduism both in South and North India. Sankara's teaching was that reality was essentially one, that the individual soul was not different from the Atman or universal soul, and the object of life was not liberation but realisation, the realisation of the fundamental identity of the apparent individual soul with the real universal soul through Jnana or knowledge. This philosophy is known as Advaita or Monism and is even now a dominant school of thought in Hinduism. To Ramanuja its extreme intellectualism appeared almost inhuman, its claims of man's identity with God as presumptuous, and its ethical conceptions loose and vague. For if all were God, it is difficult to distinguish good and bad.

So Ramanuja taught what is known as Vishishta Advaita or Monism with a qualification. According to this teaching, though ultimate reality was admitted to be single, for all practical purposes it was said to be triple, consisting of God, soul and matter. The three formed an inter-dependent harmonious whole, the last two having no independent existence apart from the First Cause or God. The conception is essentially theistic and has much in common with the theology of Islam and Christianity.

It is not necessary to go into the details of this philosophy; suffice to say that its followers generally consider devotion to God as the best way of obtaining

* For the different Hindu sects, see the author's work, *Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners.*

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salvation as opposed to Jnana Marga or the path of knowledge advocated by Sankara. In its conception of salvation too it has some resemblance to Semitic religions; for the saved soul does not lose its identity, as conceived by Advaitins, but is in bliss in the presence of the Deity.

The god of the Hindu pantheon elevated to the position of the Supreme Being by Ramanuja was Vishnu, the Preserver. The reason for this preference was perhaps the fact that, at the time of the rise of Vaishnavism, Shiva was inextricably connected with Advaita and Sakti with the dual conception, whereas Vishnu had few important cults at the time, and the enlightened and more humane minded of the Hindus were yearning for a religion free from the bloody sacrifices and crass practices associated with some of the Shaiva and Sakta cults. Anyway, Vishnu adopted by the new sect, emerged as an intensely personal God, unlike the inert Lingam and the meaninglessly dynamic Sakti.

RADHA AND KRISHNA

Now Bhakti or devotion to a Personal God is an approach open to all; even those who have no knowledge of the scriptures, the dull and the unintelligent, innocent of philosophy, theology and the intricacies of rituals and formalism, all can put their trust in God and worship Him with faith, pray to Him with a contrite heart and ask for grace and mercy. The erudite and the ignorant move on the same plane here; if anything, erudition or Jnana of the Advaitins, is more of a handicap than a help. Publicans and sinners are potential devotees of God while the all-knowing Scribe and the ritualistic Pharisee would find real devotion difficult.

Devotion, again, can be of different kinds; a man may be devoted to a friend, a servant to his master, a son to his parent, a disciple to his teacher. All these forms of devotion are recognized by Vaishnavas as valid approaches to the deity, but none of these adequately represents, they maintain, the awakened soul's all-absorbing yearning for God; this longing is best expressed in a man's passion for his beloved, in short, in sex-love, the all-consuming fire which unites two souls and bodies into one. Hence Prema or love is said to be the nearest approach to man-god relation, as conceived by most of the schools of the Bhakti cult.

This conception, it must be noted, is not peculiar to Hinduism. The *Song of Songs* in Judaism and Christianity, and the Sufi movement in Islam both express the same idea. The conception is familiar to the Catholic Church which often describes itself as the bride of Christ; nuns too consider themselves to be the brides of Jesus Christ.

The god of the love-cult in Vaishnavism is Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu.* He was, according to Hindu legend, brought up among the cowherds of Vrindaban on the banks of the Jumna near modern Mathura. Coming of age, he fought the enemies of his clan, carved out a kingdom for himself in Western India with its capital at Dwaraka; in the *Mahabharata* he appears as a statesman, diplomat and philosopher, and it was his advice and wisdom that won for the Pandavas the epic battle; further, the *Gita*, the cream of Hindu philosophy, is attributed to him. But it is not as a warrior, statesman, sage or philosopher that Krishna receives the allegiance of Vaishnavas but as a playful lover, the stealer of the hearts of the young ladies of Vrindaban (the Gopis, or milkmaids, as they

* A description of the ten incarnations of Vishnu will be found in the author's work, *Epics, Myths and Legends of India.*

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are called), with whom he played and danced as a boy when he tended the flocks of the Gopas and roved the arcadian fields of Vrindaban, resonant with the notes of his enchanting flute. This handsome gay philanderer, revelling in the love of young girls, free from the load of ancient wisdom and tortuous ritual, is the god of the devotee; and in the groves of Vrindaban, with its air laden with the perfume of flowers, resounding with the music of the cuckoo and the humming bee, away from the social bonds that choke man in city and town, away from the closed walls of the temple and the long rituals that vitiate worship, the soul is free to follow the Lord as a young maid in love follows her lover.

It must be emphasized that married love does not adequately represent the soul's passion for God. In marriage, love is not free, but a sense of duty binds it; and duty, even when it is for the highest good is a bond, and a chain, whether of gold or of steel, is still a fetter. Hence true love is difficult in marriage. It is love before marriage, illicit love if you please (where divine love is concerned, the petty moral conceptions of man seldom disturb the true Vaishnava), that best represents the highest devotion. In keeping with this notion, the goddess elevated to the position of the mistress of the cult is not any one of the numerous wives of Krishna, but Radha the wedded wife of the herdsman Ayanaghosha; and her husband is as dead to the cult as the 16,008 wives of Krishna.

The need for discarding all our petty notions of moral niceties, for forgetting the coarse outward forms that stand between God and souls, is illustrated by an allegory given in the Hindu scriptures. Krishna, in a playful mood, stole the clothes of the Gopis while they were bathing in the Jumna; as the Gopis, after their bath, came to the river bank, and, disconcerted, began to look for their clothes, they found the young Krishna sitting on the branch of a tree near by and watching them. Ashamed, they shrank back from their ribald lover, but he made them come to him in their nudity and receive their clothes. Thus the soul, athirst for God, must approach Him naked, be indifferent to the censure of the public and to one's own notions of propriety, which are all, in effect, so many obstacles that stand between man and God.

BARDS OF THE RADHA-KRISHNA CULT

Song and dance have an important place in all Bhakti cults, more so in the worship of Radha and Krishna. The dance of Krishna with the Gopis in Vrindaban is a favourite theme of the poets of the Radha-Krishna cult. On moonlight nights, Hindu scriptures tell us, when the whole Vrindaban was asleep, Krishna with his flute stole into the groves on the banks of the Jumna and played a love-note; this woke the Gopis who, leaving their husbands and parents, followed his love-call and joined him in the grove. Here Krishna played with the Gopis and danced the Rasa Lila; as each Gopi wanted her heart-ravisher to herself Krishna, by his divine power, multiplied himself at times and danced with each girl as she wished. The Rasa is thus described in the *Vishnu Purana*: "As each of the Gopis tried to remain close to Krishna, the circle of the dance could not be constructed. Thereupon, taking each by the hand, he caressed the eyelids; upon the touch of his magic hand, the eyes of the Gopis were closed, when Hari formed the circle. Then began the dance to the accompaniment of the clashing of bracelets round the neck of Krishna. A girl proficient in the art of caresses embraced him; another entwined her slender arms around his beautiful body as a creeper climbing a tree; a third,

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pressed her globular breasts on to him, and imprinted a kiss on his lips; and so on and so forth. . . . The drops of perspiration from the arms of Hari were like fertilizing rain which produced drops of dew upon the temples of the damsels. Krishna sang the melody suited to the dance. When leading they followed him, when retracing his steps, they met him; whether he went forward or backward, they were always with him. While thus sporting with Krishna, they regarded one moment of his absence as myriads of years. . . . And though prohibited by their husbands and brothers, they went out at night to sport with Krishna, the idol of their love."*

Many songs have been composed by bards of the Bhakti cult to supply music to Rasa Lila and the theme is always the love of Krishna and the Gopis. Singing of these songs is an important part of worship in the Radha-Krishna cult, and the most popular and emotional are the songs of Jayadeva, the court-poet of Lakshmana Sena of Bengal, who lived in the 13th century of the Christian era. In Bengal, with its Tantric leanings, the cult took a particularly sensuous turn and some of the songs of Jayadeva are indistinguishable from regular love lyrics. His *Gita Govinda* is a text-book on the Radha-Krishna cult, and its translation has been appropriately named by Edwin Arnold, *The Indian Song of Songs*. It is a pastoral drama describing the dalliance of Krishna with the Gopis in the groves of Vrindaban, the jealousies and pangs of separation of Radha, her rupture with him and ultimate reconciliation, union and bliss. The following are some typical stanzas from the *Gita Govinda*:

". . . Krishna passes these idle hours
Decked forth in folds of woven gold and crowned with forest flowers,
And scented with the Sandal, and gay with gems of price,
Rubies to mate his laughing lips and diamonds like his eyes,
In company of damsels who dance and sing and play
Lies Krishna, laughing, toying, dreaming his spring away.

"One with star-blossomed Champak wreathed, woos him to rest his head
On the dark pillow of her breasts so tenderly outspread;
And o'er his brow with roses blown she fans a fragrance rare
That falls on the enchanted sense like rain in thirsty air,
While the company of damsels wave many an odorous spray,
And Krishna, laughing, toying, sighs the soft spring away.

"Another, gazing in his face, sits wistfully apart,
Searching it with those looks of love that leap from heart to heart;
Her eyes—afire with shy desire veiled by their lashes black—
Speak so that Krishna cannot choose but send the message back,
In the company of damsels whose bright eyes in a ring
Shine round him with soft meanings in the merry light of spring.

"A third one of that dazzling band of dwellers in the wood—
Body and bosom panting with the pulse of youthful blood—
Leans over him, as in his ear a lightsome thing to speak,
And then with leaf-soft lip imprints a kiss below his cheek;

* H. H. Wilson, Translation.

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A kiss that thrills, and Krishna turns at the silken touch
To give it back—Ah! Radha! forgetting thee too much!*

"And one with arch-smile beckons him away from Jumna's banks
Where the tall bamboos bristle like spears in battle ranks
And plucks his clothes to make him come into the mango shade,
Where the fruit is ripe and golden, and milk and cakes are laid;
Oh! Golden red the mangoes, and glad the feasts of spring,
And fair the flowers to lie upon and sweet the dancers sing.

"Sweetest of all that temptress who dances for him now
With subtle feet which part and meet in the Ras-measure slow
To the chime of silver bangles and the beat of rose-leaf hands,
And pipe and lute and cymbal played by the woodland bands;
So that wholly passion-laden—eyes, ears, sense, soul, o'ercome—
Krishna is theirs in the forest; his heart forgets its home."†

Even more sensuous than the lyrics of Jayadeva are the songs of Chandidasa and Vidyapathi, two other poets of the Radha-Krishna cult, who lived in East India in the fifteenth century A.D. "Vidyapathi depicts Radha as a maiden unskilled in the art of love, quivering at the touch of the Prince of Lovers. He describes Krishna's dalliance with her thus:

"Taking her hand, he sets her by his side,
And she in shame and anger veils her face;
When he unfolds her face and kisses her upon her mouth,
She hides the shamefast face in Madhav's breast.

* * *

When Kanu lifts her to his lap, she bends her body back
Like a young snake untamed by spells."

Of a different strain, but treating of the same theme, are the songs of Mirabai, the great Rajput lady who left her palace to follow the Lord. Hers is the typical example of the God-mad devotee, who makes light of the scorn of society and gets lost in song and dance in the ecstatic joy arising out of an awareness of the Lord. She was born a princess and drunk with the love of Krishna, started singing and dancing in a public shrine dedicated to the god; such performances in public were reckoned highly improper in medieval India among the respectable, and for a princess it was nothing short of the scandalous. Neither entreaties nor threats by relatives were of any avail, and the lady left her home and literally sang and danced her way to Mathura, the main seat of the Krishna cult. Her great songs breathe the spirit of the awakened soul, its sorrows and despondency in the search for the Lord, its impatience of the delay in His coming and its ecstasy in finding Him. Mira's life is also typical of the Vaishnava's indifference to social codes, of his anxiety to lay bare the soul at the feet of the Deity, the need, in effect, for

* As the queen of the cult, Radha is here depicted as jealous of Krishna's sport with other Gopis. Radha is not among them.

† Edwin Arnold, Translation.

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taking off the clothes by the Gopis in order to make them worthy of the blissful embrace of the Divine Lover.

PUSHTI MARGA OR THE PATH OF PLEASURE

From the foregoing it is clear that the Radha-Krishna cult is not enamoured of asceticism. "If living on fruits and nuts is of superior merit," sings Mira, "then monkeys and kine would go to heaven before humans; if bathing in holy streams would ensure heaven, then the fishes in the Ganges and Jumna would obtain Paradise before men." Krishna is not a lean and hungry god like Shiva, but a handsome, full-blooded youth, well attired in comely garments; the Gopis are not demented wild creatures like Kali and her associates, but gay girls full of passion and love, fond of song, dance and dalliance. Hence "shady bowers, lovely women, exquisite viands and everything that appeals to the senses" are the means of worship in the Radha-Krishna cult.

The cult has several sub-sects of which one is known as Pushti Marga or the Path of Pleasure. This sect was founded by Vallabha who lived in the fifteenth century. Vallabha's precocious learning was so vast that he is said to have mastered the four *Vedas* and the six systems of Hindu philosophy at the age of seven. He took part in a religious discussion in the court of Krishnadeva, king of Vijayanagar; he defeated his opponents and was appointed by the king Acharya or head of the Vaishnavas. Vallabha then travelled to North India and after visiting several important centres of learning, finally settled down in Benares. Here he wrote many learned treatises of which his commentary on the *Bhagvata Purana* elucidates his philosophy.

The gist of Vallabha's doctrine is that "worship of the deity need not be accompanied with fasting, self-mortification and the deliberate denial of the pleasures of the senses, but that the natural appetites were intended to be gratified, and the good things of this world may be enjoyed." It should not, however, be imagined that Vallabha was a mere hedonist; he himself was an austere saint, but he did not preach a philosophy of asceticism but maintained that self-surrender to God and not self-denial was the proper means to salvation.

Vallabha had eighty-four disciples, and on his death these zealous Vaishnavas disseminated his teaching in several parts of India. The real successor to Vallabha's Gadi or "throne" was his second son Vithalnatha, who settled down at Gokul near Mathura; he was generally known as Gokul Gosain, the latter word meaning "lord of cows," an epithet of Krishna. Vithalnatha had seven sons, each of whom established a Gadi, and their influence became particularly strong in Western India; here the wealthy mercantile communities were attracted to the cult and the Pontiffs of the sect came to be known by the royal title of "Maharajahs" (Great Kings).

The Maharajahs are considered living Krishnas by their followers. There are, at present, more than a hundred Maharajahs in India, all of them claiming descent from Gokulnathji, the fourth son of Vithalnatha. A good many of them have their Gadis in Mathura, but the Maharajahs of Western India are generally more wealthy; in fact, the Maharajah of Nat Dwara in Rajasthan is considered the Supreme Pontiff of the sect. In support of his claim for this title, it is related that the principal image of Krishna in Mathura was removed from this stronghold of Krishna cult during the Muslim invasion and installed in the temple at Nat Dwara.

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A peculiarity of most of the Radha-Krishna cults is that they consider Krishna alone as the true male; human males, however virile, are reckoned female in comparison to Krishna. Agreeable to these notions, the Maharajahs, in the more esoteric forms of the worship, lead the congregation dressed as Gopis.

MINOR RADHA-KRISHNA SECTS

The want of a central authority in Hinduism to control dogma and direct ritual and worship has, in the Radha-Krishna cult also, led to extreme views. Some of the sects, for instance, maintain that it is impossible for human beings, because of their limitations, to worship the true male Krishna and all they can do is to worship Radha. The Radha-Vallabhis, a sect founded by Harivamsa in the sixteenth century, are of this opinion, and in their rituals all worshippers, both men and women, have to dress as the handmaids of Radha who is supposed to receive their homage and not Krishna. The Sakhi Bhavas, who came into prominence some hundred years ago, consider that mere dressing as Gopis is not sufficient to camouflage their sex but "feign some physical conditions which are only possible to women."

As such, it is difficult to draw the line between the Circle Worship of the Tantrics and the rituals of some of the Radha-Krishna extremists, especially as certain Vaishnava sects have liberally borrowed from the Tantrics and improved upon what they borrowed. In fact, among the Vaishnavas too there are many subsects who have their own methods of Circle Worship; these, though called Vaishnavas, are in reality Tantrics. But such deviations are rare among recognized sects of Vaishnavas whose beliefs and practices are generally informed by a healthy respect for life and abstention from drinking and meat-eating.

Before closing the chapter, it will be interesting to recall the activities of a sect called "Om Mandali" which created a sensation in Karachi in the fourth decade of the 20th century when I was in the city. A wealthy merchant of Hyderabad (Sind) retired from business to lead a religious life. His establishment in Hyderabad became a centre of worship of Krishna in the neighbourhood; after a couple of years, the congregation increased and the merchant claimed that he was an incarnation of Krishna and his daughter-in-law, of Radha. His house was converted into the temple of the cult, and midnight music and moonlight dances became a regular feature of worship, and some of the ladies who were attracted to the cult left their homes and started staying in the New Vrindaban. At this point, the citizens of Hyderabad revolted, and the twentieth century Krishna, with his Gopis, moved to a palatial establishment in Karachi. The persecutors of the sect also moved down to Karachi, some to claim their wives and others their daughters. Regular picketing, threats of legal action and even assault on the new incarnation made life difficult for Krishna and his Gopis, and the congregation had to leave Karachi because of harassment by unbelievers.

The sect, however, did not obtain recognition after its departure from Karachi, but died a natural death.

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12. Devadasis or Slave-Girls of the Gods

In the development of Hinduism, three definite stages can be traced from the time of the Aryan conquest till the Muslim invasion of India in the twelfth century. These three phases of Hindu religious development may be termed the Vedic, the Puranic and the Tantric.

The Vedic phase started from about 1000 B.C. when the Aryan conquerors settled down in Northern India and dominated the political and religious life of the country; the Aryans, who conquered India, were nomads who had no great rituals or temples. Their main religious functions were thanksgiving ceremonies to the Aryan deities like Indra, Varuna, the Maruts, etc., for success in war with the indigenous peoples of India; offering of food and meat to the deities and singing hymns in their praise constituted the main items in early Vedic worship, and the ceremonies generally concluded with feasting, in which the drinking of Soma, an intoxicating beverage, played an important part. When Indo-Aryans conquered the great kingdoms and cities of the Indians and settled down in the country, rituals became more elaborate; animal sacrifices according to prescribed rites, on specially constructed altars, were the main mode of worship in later Vedic religion. The idea of building temples of a permanent nature and installing deities was still far off; if anything, Vedic Aryans combated all tendencies to corrupt their religion whether it came from the indigenous peoples of India or from outside.

The sacrificial religion of the later Vedic period received a serious setback with the rise of Jainism and Buddhism. During the reign of the Mauryan emperors, Jainism and Buddhism became the predominant religions of the whole of India, and animal sacrifices began to be reckoned as barbarous and inhuman. The Vedic religion may be said to have ended with the rise of the Mauryan Empire.

With the collapse of the Mauryan Empire, India was invaded by numerous tribes from Central Asia and elsewhere; many indigenous tribes too came into prominence and built kingdoms of their own. The Indo-Aryan ideals could no more be isolated from the beliefs and practices of these alien elements, and a good deal of assimilation and adaptation became necessary in the ancient Indo-Aryan religion. And the Hinduism that emerged out of this synthesis is known as *Puranic* or of the *Puranas*, as the texts compiled for the popularisation of this movement are called.

During the Puranic period, all public performance of sacrifices was given up, due, no doubt, to the ideals of Ahimsa that had become popular under the influence of Jainism and Buddhism. The worship of the great Vedic deities like Indra, Varuna and the Maruts was either abandoned or superseded by that of

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other deities of whom the most important were Shiva, his wife, and Vishnu. Great temples rose all over India, and image worship became the most important feature of popular religion.

This Puranic period may be said to have lasted from the time of the collapse of the Mauryan Empire in the second century B.C. till the end of the reign of the Imperial Guptas in the fifth century A.D. The fall of the Guptan Empire was, again, marked by the incursions of wild tribes into India from Central Asia, and this continued right down to the twelfth century. As in the Puranic period, the cults, gods and modes of worship of many foreign races got incorporated into Hinduism, and the net result was the predominance of sex-worship as embodied in various Tantric cults. This Tantric phase continued till the rise of Vaishnavism in the thirteenth century and the spread of Muslim and Christian influences.

In Indian Buddhism too, these three phases can be clearly seen. The primitive or Hinayana phase lasted from the time of the Buddha till the collapse of the Mauryan Empire; the regular Mahayana phase from about the second century B.C. till the seventh century A.D. and from this time till the disappearance of Buddhism in India it was dominated by Tantric doctrines.

The institution of Devadasis and certain extravagances in sex-worship, which will be noticed in the next chapter, are to be studied against this background.

We have seen that though early Aryans were antagonistic to it, sex-worship formed an important part of religion among ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Hellenic religions. Pre-Aryan India had contact with the Mesopotamians and it is likely that fertility cults formed a part of worship of many tribes in India whom the Aryans conquered.

We know from the writings of the ancients that sacred prostitution was practised in most of the Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek temples. A good many of these temples had courtesans attached to them in order to sing and dance before the idols and enhance the general attractions and the revenue of the shrine; in Babylon was a curious custom by which every woman in the country had to practise the trade at least once in her life in the precincts of the temple and offer the wages earned to the coffers of the temple. Herodotus tells us that during the feasts of Mylitta, in the spacious courtyards of the temple "women sit within a holy enclosure with wreaths of strings about their heads; lines of cord mark out the path in all directions among the women, and strangers pass along them to make their choice. The woman goes with the first man who throws money into her lap, and rejects no one." The historian adds that young and attractive women could get customers immediately they entered the precincts of the temple, whereas the elderly and ugly had to live for days before discharging their obligations to the deity. The observation of Herodotus is attested by the Hebrews too. For in the Old Testament we read of these devotees of Mylitta: "they with cords about them sit in the ways burning olive stones. And any one of them, drawn away by some stranger lieth with him; she upbraideth her neighbour that she was not thought as worthy as herself."*

The temple of Corinth in Greece, dedicated to Aphrodite Pandemos, was well known for her sacred courtesans. "In Egypt, the temples of Isis and Osiris were associated with orgiastic rituals of which the main attraction was dancing by professional women. Moloch, Baal and Astarte had their feasts too with attendant sensual delights." The prohibition in Leviticus "not to do after the doings

* Baruch, 6; 42 & 43.

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of the land of Egypt nor after the land of Canaan" refers to these customs.

Such practices were possibly common in the religion of pre-Aryan India, and with the rise of the Puranic religion, and the assimilation of alien doctrines, gods and rituals by Indo-Aryans, they received recognition and patronage by powerful monarchs. And one of the institutions that thus became popular in Puranic Hinduism was the Devadasi or "slave-girls of the gods."

Originally, the function of the Devadasi was to sing and dance before the idols and generally enhance the importance and attraction of temple-worship; in the Tantric period they were extensively used in Circle Worship and the Devadasi generally degenerated into a prostitute, and pilgrims and all those who could afford to pay them resorted to the Devadasis' quarters for entertainment.

PROSTITUTION IN ANCIENT INDIA

This institution, which appears so very impious from our modern standards, should be studied against the social and moral background of the times. In the ancient world prostitution was considered a desirable social institution, and to keep mistresses was not reckoned a moral lapse; in ancient Greece the hetaera, as is well known, was a respected individual.

In ancient India, particularly, prostitution was considered one of the recognized professions which received encouragement from the state and society. The Ganikas, who ruled high society in ancient and medieval India, were accomplished courtesans who patronised poets and scholars, actors and dramatists. There are several Sanskrit works dealing with the art of training courtesans and the practice of the profession in general. Ganikas were considered the ornaments of every city, and a famous courtesan could enhance the glory of a kingdom. In the Buddhist scriptures we read of a serious discussion in an Assembly of Elders as how to attract to their city a famous courtesan from a neighbouring country in order to build up the fame of their city and ruin their neighbours. The courtesan Ambapali, again, was powerful enough to ignore the warnings of the Licchavi Chiefs, the rulers of her city, and entertain the Buddha who accepted the gift of her Mango grove. The Buddha did not advise her to leave her "evil ways" as sages now would have called her profession; in fact it would appear that he did not consider her profession as particularly ignominous, nor did he think it more sinful than that of many others.

The same indulgence towards the profession can be noticed in Hindu scriptures too. We read of courtesans in the epics as going out to receive heroes at city gates, and leading processions during religious festivals and ceremonial occasions. In the *Mahabharata* we read of a learned classification of prostitutes, and one class is known as Deva Vesya or harlots of the gods, and another as Raja Vesya or royal harlots. The *Artha Sastra* of Chanakya deals in detail with Raja Vesyas or the prostitutes attached to the court, and the chief courtesan of this category received almost the wages of a minister. In the *Mricchakatika*, a play written by a king in the first or second century of the Christian era, the heroine is a "virtuous" courtesan named Vasantasena, accomplished, honest, generous, loyal to her lover and kind and considerate to his wife and son.*

Nor is all this pious fiction. Foreigners who visited India in the middle ages, especially the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar, have left us records of the high esteem

* For details of the profession and the patronage extended to courtesans in ancient India, see the author's work, *Kama Kalpa.*

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in which courtesans were held, their honoured place in court functions, their wealth, power and influence on well-placed individuals.

It may appear strange how the Hindus who had always demanded of their women the highest loyalty to husbands, even to the point of self-immolation in Sati, could hold courtesans in such esteem. The explanation is that to the ancient and medieval Hindu, morality was inextricably linked with caste.

There was no uniform standard of morality applicable to all castes alike. To the three higher castes, the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaisya, on whom the Dharma Sastra or Indo-Aryan Law was binding, the highest duty of a woman was devotion and loyalty to her husband. But the vast majority of the population of India belonged to the Sudra (fourth caste) and Panchamas (fifth), both placed outside the pale of Aryan society, and they were not bound by the Dharma Sastra but were ruled in social, moral and religious matters by immemorial custom and tradition; there were numerous subdivisions among the Sudras and Panchamas with peculiar customs and manners and varying moral codes. Among these could be found polyandrous people, matriarchal communities, and primitive tribes among whom matrimonial ties were loose. Again, caste was inextricably linked with occupation among the Hindus; and prostitution, considered a legitimate occupation necessary for the pleasure and entertainment of men and pageants in society, had been followed by certain subcastes among the Sudras as their traditional profession, and in practically every part of India could be found such castes. Their women were singers and dancers and ran establishments for the entertainment of men; they performed in social functions of the well-to-do on payment. Women enjoyed greater social rights among these castes than men, and descent was reckoned through mothers and not fathers; men of these castes assisted the women in acting and dancing, and played in the orchestra; when business was slack, they worked as pimps. The women from very childhood were trained in music, poetry, dancing, embroidery, flower arrangements, in fact, in all those arts and sciences calculated to please men of wealth, and by the time a girl attained womanhood, she had not only built up a fine slender body by dieting and dancing, but had also become a highly accomplished, desirable companion for men.

The wives of the generality of men, on the other hand, were anything but interesting. Very rarely moving out of doors, generally illiterate, bent by excessive childbearing, condemned to domestic drudgery, the housewife, no doubt, was pious but seldom attractive. Men approached their wives for progeny as a matter of duty, but for entertainment and pleasure they resorted to the courtesans. Further, for men loyalty to the marital bed was not considered very binding; they were allowed to marry several wives, and it was fashionable for the wealthy to patronise famous courtesans.

This was the attitude of society towards prostitution in ancient and medieval India, and it is no wonder that the courtesans found their way to temples. In India, temples were not merely shrines for dry worship, but centres of social activity as well, and the feasts and festivals of the gods were occasions for arranging musical concerts and stage shows, for processions and pageantry.

TEMPLE DANCERS

The *Artha Sastra*, written in the Mauryan period, while mentioning and even insisting on royal patronage of prostitution, does not mention their employ-

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ment in temples. But with the rise of the Puranic religion, they began to be employed in the more important of the shrines where images were installed.

In popular Hinduism, an image is not mere dead stone, but a living thing with sentiments, hunger and thirst and the daily Puja or worship consists mainly of giving food, drink and clothes to the image and water for its ablutions. These images, like their worshippers, appreciate music and dancing, and the main duty of the dancing girls when the institution was first established, was to sing and dance before the idols at regular intervals. When the wealth and power of temples increased, mere solo performance was considered insufficient, and troupes started dancing in the Mandapa which provided much pleasure to the gods and to the spectators, and the temple started attracting a large number of pilgrims and worshippers. In temple-processions accompanied by idols, dancing girls usually fanned the images as these processions were invariably taken out in the hot sun. Most of these dancing girls had quarters near the temple so that they could perform their sacred duties punctually and regularly.

Some of the dancing girls were recruited from the caste of prostitutes, but as the power and prestige of certain shrines increased and with them the credulity of the public, there started, in certain parts of India, pious practices by which parents at times vowed to offer their first-born daughters to the deity. Usually, women who had no children for years after marriage, or who had difficult labour made such vows. Nor was it unusual for certain parents to offer their daughters born in an unlucky hour to the temple. Among some communities, a fifth daughter was considered a harbinger of evil and given over to the temple. The belief still prevails but now that the institution of Devadasis has been abolished, parents have other means of disposing of the unwanted fifth daughter; when I visited a certain orphanage run by missionaries in a town in South India, the lady in-charge pointed out a sweet-looking young girl of about seven and told me: "Do you know, her parents are one of the wealthiest in so-and-so town; but being the fifth daughter, she was made over to us."

The Abbé Dubois who visited India in the nineteenth century has recorded a curious practice that obtained in the temple of Tirupathi in South India. While the image was taken out in procession, the priests went out into the crowd and demanded of their guardians any good looking young ladies they found; while some of the guardians refused to surrender their wards, there were others who felt flattered by the attention bestowed upon them by the deity and willingly made over the ladies to the priests for admission into the seraglio of the Lord of Tirupathi. The same authority tells us that when some of the Devadasis of Tirupathi got old, the deity decided to divorce them, and they were then branded and sent out of the temple with a certificate of good conduct which recommended them to the charity of the pious. These divorced minor wives of the Lord of Tirupathi were known as Kali Yuga Lakshmis (the presiding deity of Tirupathi is Vishnu, and Lakshmi is the wife of Vishnu) and they were sumptuously fed and given cash by the pious wherever they cared to go.

The number of Devadasis in a medieval Hindu temple was generally proportionate to the fame of the shrine. The celebrated temple of Somnath, which Mahmud Ghazni destroyed, had more than 500 Devadasis in its service, "in order to provide music before the idol throughout day and night." The Tanjore temple built by king Raja Rajah Chola in the 10th century of the Christian era, had an initial endowment of 400 Devadasis, and each was given land for her maintenance.

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The Sun temples were particularly famous for their Devadasis and erotic sculptures. Huien Tsang mentions that the Sun Temple at Multan harboured some of the most famous dancing girls in India. In the *Bhavishya Purana* we read that the surest way of attaining Surya Loka or the Heaven of Sun was to dedicate a bevy of dancing girls to a sanctuary built in honour of the sun-god.

The most important phase in the growth of the institution was the Tantric period, when most of the temples, especially in North and East India, were dominated by sex cults. The Devadasis took part in the various Circles of the Tantrics, and many temples though outwardly dedicated to Shiva, Surya or Vishnu, were in reality Tantric shrines, some of them practising excesses and strange cults in which communal Maithuna formed an important part.

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE DEVADASIS

The general effect of the institution of Devadasis was, no doubt, undesirable, and right-minded Hindus worked for its abolition. The Muslim scholar Alberuni has recorded that certain sections among the Hindus resented it but kings with their own institution of court-dancers were too powerful for the dissenters and Devadasis continued to flourish in spite of opposition. We read in an inscription of the tenth century of the Christian era, by a Rajput chieftain bequeathing his patrimony to his descendents, that "if the arrangements made about the employment of dancing girls in the temples were interfered with by ascetics and other Brahmins, these should be at once stopped."

The institution, in spite of opposition by the morally sensitive, continued to flourish, but with the arrival of the Muslims the power and wealth of the Hindu temples generally began to wane, especially in North India, and with it the institution of Devadasis. Later, British influence and enlightened Indian public opinion undermined the sanctions of the institution, and by the end of the 19th century, the Devadasis came to be looked upon as a blot on and not an adornment to temples. In South India, where Muslim influence was slow to penetrate, many temples still retained Devadasis. When Monier Williams visited the Tanjore temple he found fifteen Devadasis, ten of whom performed before him in the temple courtyard. The Abbé Dubois, another 19th century visitor, who travelled extensively in South India states that "every temple of any importance has in its service a band of eight, twelve or more Devadasis. Their official duties consist in dancing and singing within the temple twice a day, morning and evening, and also at all public ceremonies." What he says about their unofficial duties is unprintable.

The institution of Devadasis was abolished by law during the British period in the then Madras Presidency, and other presidencies and some Indian States followed the lead of Madras. At present there are no temples in India where they are overtly retained.

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13. Eroticism in Indian Religious Art

Even a casual observer of Indian religious art, especially sculpture, cannot but be struck by its emphasis on sexuality. To the European and American, who have been brought up to look upon everything connected with sex as impious in a religious atmosphere, many Hindu temples would appear to have been designed to promote sin and not virtue. It was , in effect, this sinful appearance of medieval Hindu temples that led to their large-scale destruction by early Muslim invaders.

But Indian religions are not to be judged by Semitic standards. Hinduism, as we have seen, treats sex as a perfectly natural phenomenon, and religious mysticism is inclined to deify rather than suppress it. Further, to the artist interested in the human body, clothes are an impediment to aesthetic expression; while in Western countries, the sculptor and painter of religious subjects were forced to conform to the standards of prudery obtaining in these regions, in medieval India they were allowed full freedom to give expression to their genius without any hindrance. Hence not only the ribald Yakshi and voluptuous Apsara appear in the decorative art of Hindu and Buddhist shrines as full-blooded, heavy-breasted, broad-hipped females, naked and unashamed, but even highly respected goddesses like the bashful bride Parvati, the muse Sarasvati and the faithful Lakshmi are represented in Hindu temple sculpture in similar styles. Indians did not consider that any harm could result from a charming representation of the bare body of a goddess.

During what was known as the Gandhara period in Indian art, due mainly to Greek and Persian influences from Bactria and kingdoms farther west, efforts were made to drape gods and goddesses elaborately, but the influence of the Gandhara school was confined to the north-west of India, and with the rise of the purely Indian school at Mathura, the Western style of draping divine figures was given up in favour of more natural representations.

Figures of lovers formed a favourite motif for decorative art in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu shrines from the very beginning of Indo-Aryan art. In the Puranic period and early Mahayana phase of Buddhism, flirtation was the favourite theme. Teasing, offering of flowers, fruits and drinks, the kiss, the embrace, etc., were exquisitely depicted, but not the more serious pleasures of sex. Love scenes are numerous in the early Buddhist art of the Kushans, at Ajanta, Karle and other shrines. In the classical Guptan art too, the same emphasis on restrained love is discernible.

In judging Indian religious art, it must be borne in mind that the temple was not considered a mere place of worship; it was an art gallery too, where the artist was allowed to express his skill on any theme he wished, and people could divert themselves, leisurely walking about the temple precincts, appreciating the exuberant carvings on pillars and walls.

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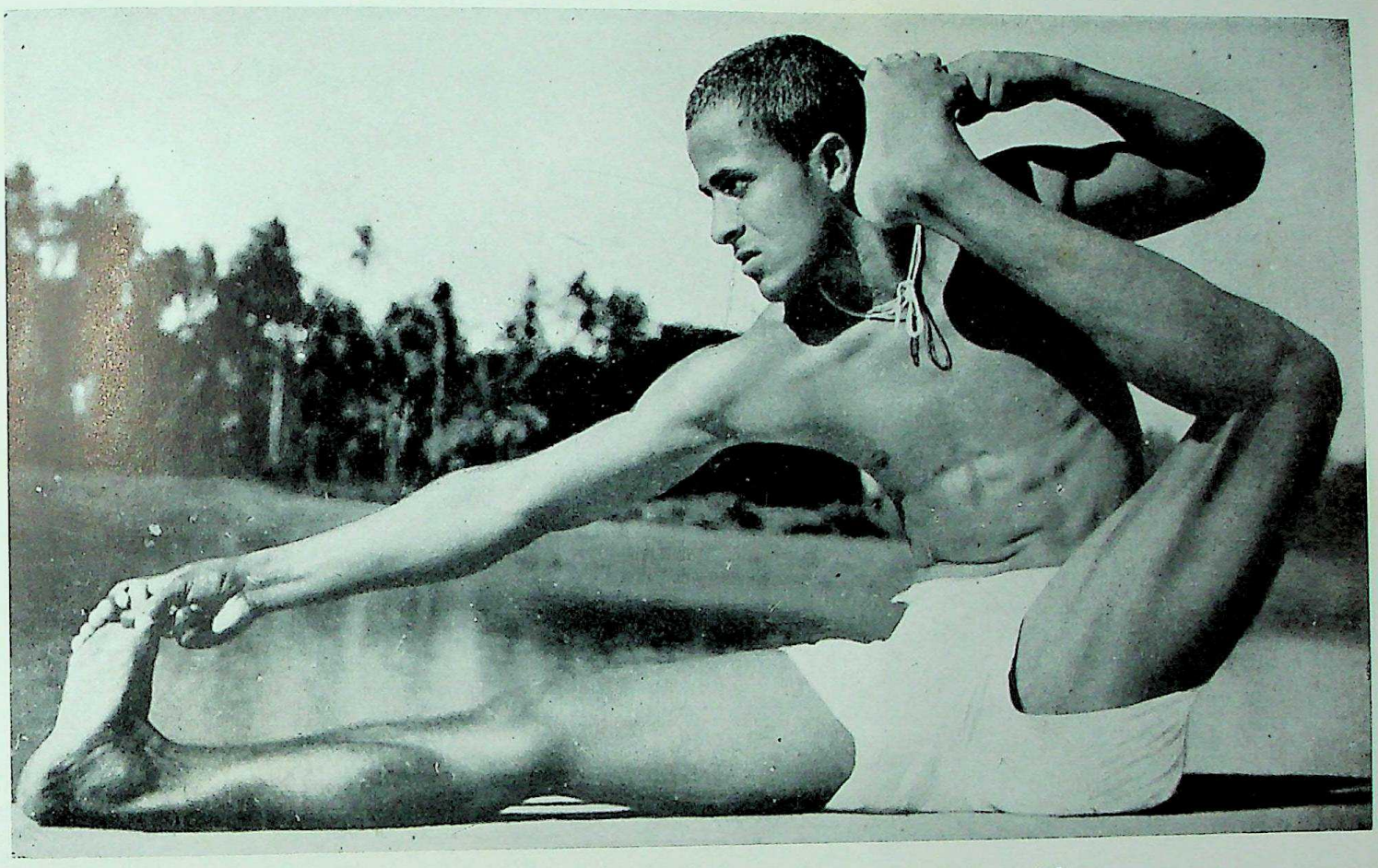

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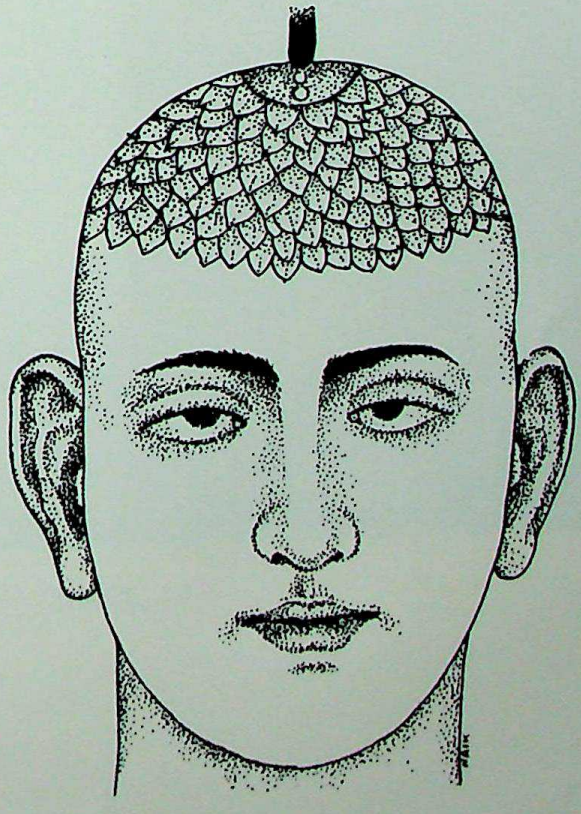

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111. AKARSHA DHANUR ASANA (Yogic Posture)

112. SAHASRARA CHAKRA (Mystic centre of a thousand lotuses)

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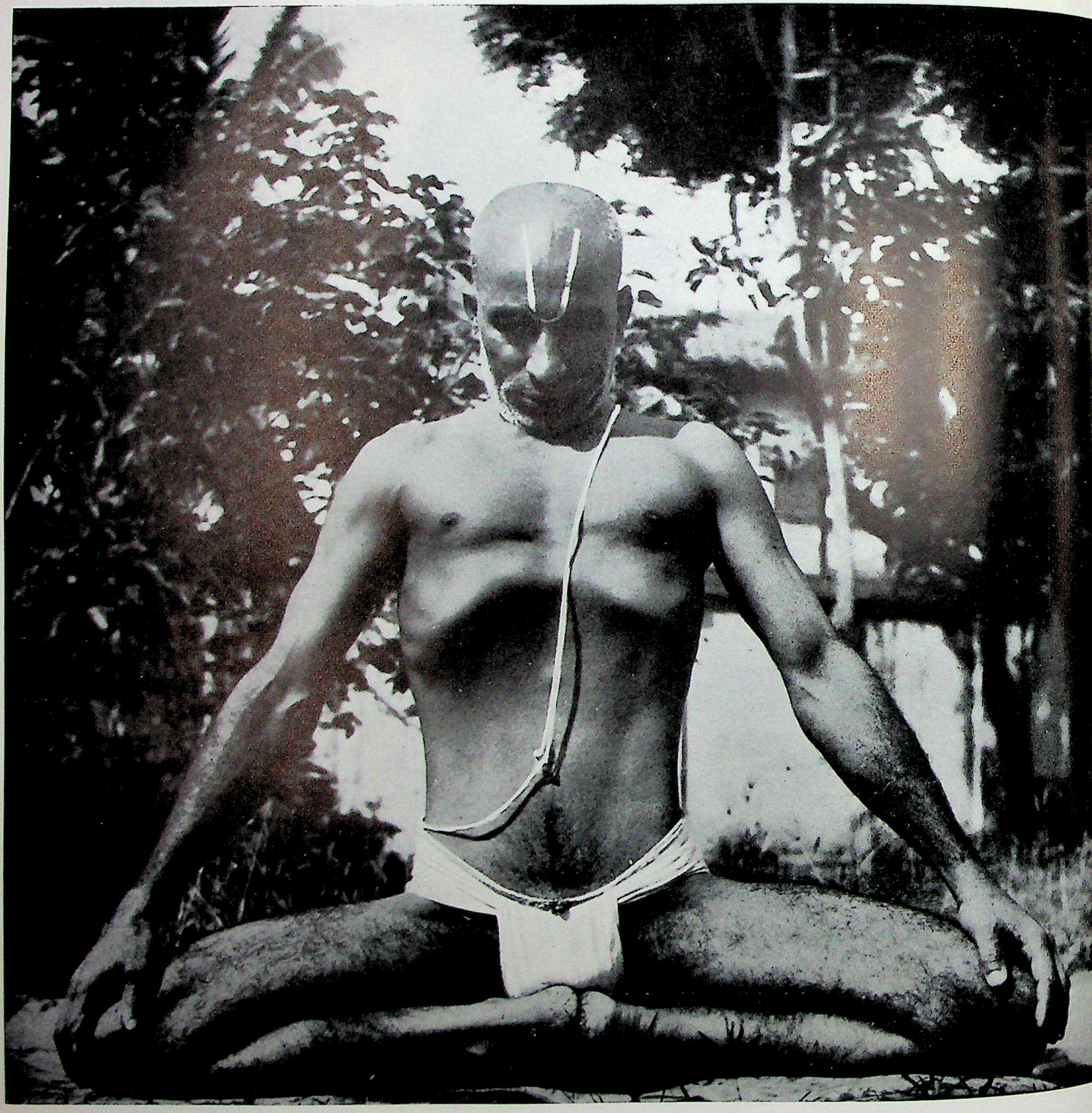

113. PRANAYAM OR YOGIC POSTURE FOR CONTROL OF BREATH

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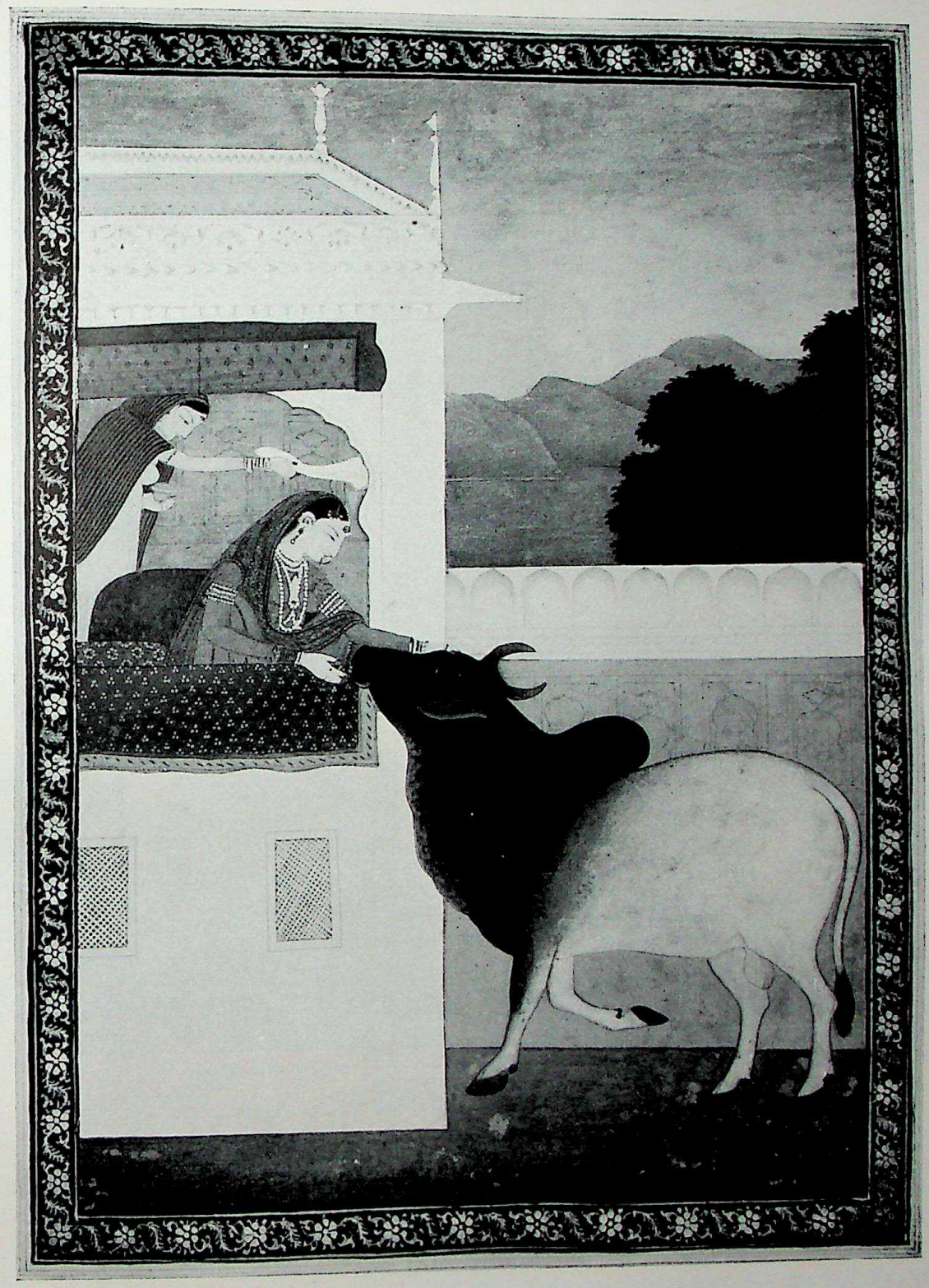

114. LADY WORSHIPPING THE BULL
(*From* N. C. Mehta's *Studies in Indian Painting*)

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115. KRISHNA AND RADHA
(*From* N. C. Mehta's *Studies in Indian Painting*)

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During the Tantric phase, erotic art was invested with a sombre meaning. Sex was not a matter for mere decorative art, and flirtation and philandering did not sufficiently represent its cosmic character; the only thing that could properly impress upon the worshipper its mysterious and all-pervading power, was the passionate effort of two beings to become one.

EROTIC SCULPTURES IN TANTRIC SHRINES

The period between the seventh or eighth century and the twelfth, as we have seen, was the Tantric phase of Hinduism. During this period, sex cults got such extraordinary dominance all over North India, that most of the existing temples, while outwardly conforming to their ancient practices, adopted Tantric rituals in the higher mysteries which were reserved for the elite. Hindu kings, chieftains and the sacerdotal hierarchy were welded together by magical rites that promised immortality or transformation into divinities through ritualistic indulgence in wine and women.

The period was one of extraordinary belief in magic, even in the highest quarters, throughout the world. In China, Taoist priests were preparing the Elixir of Immortality which sent many a credulous emperor to a premature grave. In the West, alchemists were experimenting in the art of transmuting base metals into gold. And in India, Tantric wizards were promising to transform kings into gods through the magical potency of carnal knowledge of a multitude of women.

This cult of the god-king received active patronage of kings throughout North India, and many a credulous king gave himself up to the pleasant method of obtaining divinity, immortality or liberation through wine and women, and the perishable affairs of the state were left to the care of ministers. For all practical purposes, the ministers were the rulers, and the kings were mainly occupied with the practice of magical rites under the supervision of wizards who were, in all probability, the partisans or hirelings of the ruling ministers. This was the state of affairs in some Hindu states during the Tantric period, and survivals can be found in Nepal today.

The disappearance of Buddhism in India is often attributed to the infiltration of corrupt Tantric practices into it; but Hinduism was not less Tantric at the time of the disappearance of Buddhism in India, and it cannot be argued that sex-worship led to the weakening of the one while it strengthened the other. If anything, the decay of Buddhism is to be attributed to the popularity of Tantric Hinduism which enjoyed the allegiance of powerful rulers; the acceptance of Tantric practices in Buddhism was, in all probability, a belated attempt to popularise Buddhism which was losing ground to Tantric cults throughout India.

Now these sex cults required the correct atmosphere for their practice. Many of the temples under royal patronage had risen to great fame and wealth, and they could afford to spend much money and time in erecting shrines befitting the greatness of the cult. And Tantric ideals had become so familiar to the generality of worshippers, initiates as well as laymen, that it was considered desirable to introduce Maithuna, the fifth "M" of the Circle Worship, in the religious art of temples. And in certain cults the magical potency of sex was considered directly proportional to its frequency and perversity, and some of the temples that specialised in these cults became veritable monuments of what the Pasus (Tantric term for the uninitiated) might well call obscenity.

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In medieval India there were large numbers of such temples but the Muslim invasion took a terrible toll of them. In fact, the Muslims were mainly responsible for breaking the Tantric cult in India as, in the general devastation that followed their invasion, most of the important Tantric strongholds in the Indo-Gangetic plain were destroyed, and the cult had to take refuge in Bengal and Assam.

KHAJURAHO AND KONARAK

Of the few Tantric shrines that survived the iconoclasm of early Muslim invaders, two groups have come down to us, one at Khajuraho and the other at Konarak in Orissa. Neither is a living shrine; for the excessive outward eroticism of Tantric religion fell out of favour in India shortly after the Muslim invasion and the rise of Vaishnavism. But both Khajuraho and Konarak give us a fairly sound idea of the power and prestige certain extreme forms of the Tantric cult enjoyed in India and the amount of wealth and men employed in building erotic shrines to popularise the cults.

Both the Khajuraho and Konarak temples belong to the 9th-13th centuries, when the power of the Tantrics was at its height, and are dominated by erotic sculptures, aesthetically graceful but morally objectionable. Not only normal sexual postures but even perverse practices are openly depicted at these shrines, emphasising the need for excessive sex activities for the elevation of the soul.

The temple at Konarak is dedicated to the sun-god Surya, but the cult practised, as the sculptures indicate, were gross forms of Tantrism. The temple was built in the thirteenth century, and was abandoned soon after it was built for some unknown reason. An annual festival, however, is held at the shrine for which even now pilgrims from several parts of the country congregate. The Konarak temple was probably the last bastion of medieval Tantrism. The structural peculiarity of the Konarak temple is that it was built with blocks of granite without the use of mortar. "The blocks are held together by a system of poise and balance, the weight of one stone acting against the pressure of another, much of the stability of the structure being a matter of balance and equilibrium."

Of the art and cult of this temple of Konarak, it will be interesting to quote the following passages from a well-known authority on the subject. "These (the sculptures) indicate the emergence of a popular phase of Hinduism known as Tantrism, the Maithuna ritual of which is represented in the carvings of this temple. Such a conception is not, however, limited to the temple of Konarak; it finds expression at intervals not only in the art of the country, but also in its literature, both prose and poetry.... But nowhere are its observances more blatantly exploited than on the walls of the temple of the Sun at Konarak, the figure sculptures of which are very largely representations of sexual perversion. In Orissa at this period the Maithuna movement appears to have obtained a firm hold on a considerable section of the community, while it is worthy of remark that the carvings reproduced an ethnological type, very distinctive in appearance, which is now never seen. It is not improbable that this temple was erected on such a remote site in order that the practices so wantonly illustrated might be ceremoniously conducted by its addicts in an underworld of their own. The ultimate result was the same as that which has overtaken other races who have abandoned themselves to such unnatural pursuits. Konarak is deserted, the hierarchy and its following have died out, and even in the distant towns where this debased thought also appears

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to have prevailed, the people show symptoms of its deplorable effects. Whether this form of worship was so deep and widespread that its consequences caused much of the original Orissan stock to disappear and its place to be taken by others, is outside the present subject, but it is significant that the raising of such stupendous monuments as were then produced seems beyond the capacity of the present populace.

"It has been noted that these plastic obscenities are confined entirely to the exterior of the temple so that it is assumed the elemental observances they represent work upon the outside which may account for the plain interior of the great hall, appearing by contrast, relatively pure and holy. Such, however, is only one of the mysteries attached to this vast, solitary pile which for centuries has been slowly subsiding into the dust. But its disfigured beauty cannot be concealed, nor its sinister character suppressed, the drifting sands around ceaselessly whispering, although as ceaselessly they endeavour to hide it. Yet once every year the stillness is shattered, the temple again comes to life to recall scenes of its ancient glory, when, stirred by some strange instinct like that of migratory birds, pilgrims in their thousands converge from long distances to worship the Sun-god within its precincts. For one whole day its broken walls pulsate with religious emotion and its crumbling courts echo with fervent prayers from people of all classes. Then 'night over all spreads her garment,' and by the following dawn, the place is deserted, the devotees have filtered away in groups across the sand towards the horizon and the great ruin sinks again into solitary silence, steeped in its own dark thoughts."*

The temple of Khajuraho is another surviving shrine of a Tantric cult known as Kaula-Kapalika. In this cult, it would appear, the terrors of the Kapalika doctrines were exploited by the Tantrics so that its missionary, "armed with a sword for human sacrifice with which he first intimidates his opponents, afterwards converting them by means of alcohol (amrita) and 'religion' in the guise of a Kapalini—a beautiful prostitute whose embraces immediately convince corrupt Buddhist and Jaina monks."

The temples of Khajuraho were built in the tenth century of the Christian era by the Chandellas, but were abandoned not much later possibly because the sinister cult it represented had been replaced by more sober forms of worship. King Kirti Varman (1070-1100), we are told, abandoned Khajuraho in favour of a new capital, Mahoba. The play *Prabodha Chandrodaya* performed for the first time during Kirti Varman's reign, "is an allegory describing the kidnapping of the orthodox religion by King Error, the setting up of a heresy, the creation of new *Vedas*, *Puranas* and other pseudo-revelations with the help of 'science' and intoxication. The principal missionary of this heresy is a Kapalika-Sakta ascetic, a devotee of Bhavani-Durga."

The central doctrine of the Khajuraho cult was that kings, through communion with beautiful women converted into the goddess Sakti by appropriate magical ceremonies, could become gods. "For these god-kings, a gorgeous ritual in grandiose temples was needed, whence the spate of Saiva-Sakta temples erected within a few decades of the consecration in A.D. 954 of the—still Vaishnava—Lakshmanji. Immense sums were spent on these, on their costly idols of gold, completely covered with jewels, on all the beautiful damsels who promised eternal bliss in their alluring embraces. . . .

* Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture*, Vol. 1.

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"Finally, the principal deities represented on the walls, at least of the Kandariya Mahadeva and Visvanatha temples, were the god-kings themselves. For where we would expect the relief of some form of Shiva, we find, instead, that of a nude man in the most extraordinary copulations with one or several girls. On the walls of the Kandariya Mahadeva temple there are three such groups, one above the other, showing in the lowermost frieze an old, in the central one a middle-aged, and in the top-most, a young man.

"On the walls of the Visvanatha temple, the old man has been replaced by a solemn figure of Brahma-Shiva. The purport of these groups is clear; they represent the three Chandella rulers; old Dhanga, still reigning but no more ruling; his successor Ganda; and the crown prince, Vidyadhara. In the other temple, Dhanga's figure was replaced by that of Shiva because he had died in the meantime and had become the god instead of a mere Siddha. These relief groups are, indeed, unique. For though sexual subjects are not rare on temple walls, they normally represent Maithunas or are part of the Narathara, the frieze depicting all aspects of human life. But nowhere else is the place of honour otherwise reserved for gods allotted to genuine human beings, deified by means of sexual union."*

The cult of the god-king was widely prevalent in South-East Asia (in the Khmer and Champa kingdoms of Indo-China and in Java, for example) under the supervision of Brahmin wizards; the favourite method here of converting kings into gods was by sexual union with beautiful women transformed into Nagis (serpent-women; the Hindu dynasties of South-East Asia were believed to have originated from a Nagi whom a Brahmin from India married) by mysterious rites.

PAINTINGS AND EROTICISM

Gross eroticism in Indian religious art is mainly confined to sculpture. The paintings of pre-Muslim period that have survived are mostly Buddhist, of which the most important are the frescoes of Ajanta; these, while depicting love-scenes as part of the general theme the artists handled, do not over-emphasize sex nor do they show coital postures. The Ajanta love-scenes are on a par with Puranic sculptures of the Guptan period in which is depicted Kama or the pleasure of sex as one of the main objects of life, along with Artha (material prosperity), Dharma (social duty) and Moksha (salvation).

The great age of Indian painting started with the Moghuls, especially after Akbar and Jehangir began to patronise painting and employed large numbers of paid artists at the court. With the decline and fall of the Moghul Empire, Rajput kings continued the patronage of painting, and the two glorious epochs of Indian painting are known as the Moghul and Rajput periods. The Rajputs very naturally patronised Hindu religious themes, and we have throughout India, paintings by the masters of this period.

By this time, however, the Tantric school had lost much of its power, and its practices had fallen into disrepute. Public shrines of Tantrism disappeared and Circle Worship was driven completely underground. As such what Tantric paintings existed could receive no open patronage. But artists, as a rule, are partial to sexual themes, and fortunately for them, the rise of the Radha-Krishna cult in Vaishnavism gave them ample scope for showing their skill in amorous themes.

* Dr. H. Goetz, article in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 11th September, 1960.

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The loves of Krishna and Radha and his peccadillos with the Gopis became a favourite theme for the painters of the Rajput and later schools of painting. But in all these paintings, especially those meant for public appreciation, nudity was avoided where practicable, and copulation was taboo. The emphasis, as in pre-Tantric periods, was on flirtation rather than on copulation. The Rasalila, Krishna teasing or playing with Radha, his philandering in the woodlands with the Gopis, the lamentations of the Gopis in the absence of Krishna, their going in search of him, Krishna hiding the clothes of the Gopis and their consequent inability to get out of the water for shame, were all favourite themes for the painters of the Rajput and later schools. In some paintings, however, the naked Gopis are seen begging Krishna for their clothes, while the merry god sits on a branch of a tree with the stolen goods, but the bashful maids hide their shame with their long hair or, when the hair is not long enough, with their palms.

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PART THREE

DREAMS, OMENS, MYSTIC MARKS, EVIL EYE, BLACK TONGUE AND ASTROLOGY

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14. Dreams and Their Interpretations

DREAMS ARE very near to mystic experiences and have provided in all ages a fair field for speculation about the shape of things to come. Most of the rulers in the ancient and medieval world had regular dream-interpreters. Joseph, among the Hebrews, was, as is well known, not only a great dreamer but also an interpreter. His own dream about his brothers worshipping him is said to have come true, and by his successful interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams he is believed to have risen to the highest position in ancient Egypt.

In India and the Far East, the power of dreams to indicate the future has been recognised from time immemorial. The birth of the Buddha was, it is said, revealed to his mother by a dream in which she saw a white elephant with a white lotus entering her womb, which was interpreted by the court-astrologers as presaging the queen's conception and the greatness of the child; Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, was likewise born after the event was made known to his mother, Trisala, by several dreams. Ming Ti, the Chinese Emperor, who introduced Buddhism into China, saw the Buddha in a dream, we are told, and sent a mission to India to get Buddhist missionaries.

In dreamland, the rich and poor have perfect equality. While a king's dreams are indicative of happenings on a larger scale, the poor man's dreams give clues to his own future. But the difficulty is in getting the right interpretation. In ancient and medieval India, dream-interpreting was an art allied to astrology and was widely practised; but at present, while practising sorcerers and astrologers are numerous, it is difficult to find a regular, professional interpreter of dreams in India. Yet one occasionally comes across a learned man who has studied ancient treatises on the subject and can interpret dreams. The information given below is obtained from some such men I know, and from published works.

CLASSIFICATION OF DREAMS

Ancient Hindus, with their passion for analysis, studied all possible kinds of dreams and classified them into seven divisions, namely, (1) Dhrishtam (seen), (2) Srutam (heard), (3) Anubhutam (experienced), (4) Prarthitam (prayed for), (5) Kalpitam (thought of), (6) Bhavikam (indicative of future) and (7) Doshajam (arising out of the humors in the body).

Dhrishtam are dreams of things seen during daytime, and Srutam of things heard about. Dreams of the experiences of the day are called Anubhutam, while Prarthitam is the wishful thinking of waking hours realised in dreams. Kalpitam are those objects or happenings conceived in the mind during day and coming in dreams at night exactly in the same manner. Bhavikam dreams are those with no

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subjective background and are, more or less, providential and indicate the future. Doshajam arise out of the disharmony of the humors in the body.

Of these seven kinds, Dhrishtam, Srutam, Anubhutam, Prarthitam and Kalpitam arise mainly out of one's own past experiences or thinking, are purely subjective, and are more or less neutral in their bearing on future events. Doshajam types of dreams are caused by the preponderance of certain humors over others, and are indicative of ill-health; as such they are of interest to the pathologist only. Hence, Bhavikam types of dreams alone are important as indicative of future events.

All day dreams, that is, dreams occurring while sleeping during daytime, are of the neutral type, whatever the class of dream; similarly, very long, meandering dreams of vague and loose proportions, and very short ones leaving no impression on the mind, are indicative of nothing in particular. Dreams occurring immediately on going to bed portend events to happen after a long time, and the effects will not be so well related as later dreams. But dreams dreamt towards the close of the night yield quick and effective results. If, after an auspicious dream, the dreamer remains awake for the rest of the night, the dream will come true with better and quicker results. If a man dreams an evil dream and later, in the same night, dreams an auspicious one, the latter alone will be effective.

Dreams alone, however, are not to be taken into account in deciding the happenings of the future, as there are several other factors that may counteract the influences indicated by a dream. A saintly man, for instance, who has accumulated much virtue by his piety may prove himself immune to sins predicted by dreams; astral influences, again, might work against events indicated by dreams as also divine intervention and malignant activities of evil spirits. Hence the future to be read from the following dreams are to be considered as indicative and not as absolute.

DREAMS OF THE SICK CHAMBER

If a patient dreams that he rode on a buffalo, camel, pig, dog or donkey, or that he travelled in a southerly direction, it indicates his death.

A patient who dreams of thorny creepers, bamboos or the palmyra palm growing from his heart, will die of a tumour.

If he dreams of wearing red garments, garlands of red flowers, or being dragged by a wild woman, he will die of jaundice.

A patient who dreamt that he was drinking with the departed and, while drinking, heard the howl of a dog, would die of high fever without delay.

The sick man who dreamt that he was sitting naked, anointed with oil for a bath, and performing a Homa ceremony, while a lotus shot up from his chest, is likely to die a leper.

The person who dreamt that he drank with outcastes might die of diabetes; if he dreamt that he danced with leaping demons and fell into a pond, he might go mad; and he who dreamt that he danced with a man already dead, would die of fits.

The dream of an eclipse indicates an eye-disease; that of journey with a dead man or a pack of jackals, imminent death.

A sick man who dreamt that a bamboo or creeper grew from his bald head, that his hair was pecked by ravens or vultures, that he was completely shaved

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from head to foot, that he fell among thieves, ghosts, demons, women, blind people, outcastes or caught in mazes of canes, reeds or thorny bushes and could not extricate himself, that he found himself in a lonely cave or cremation ground, that he fell in an ash pit or dust-bin or was carried away by a current, is likely to come by sudden death; the dream of one having danced in mad frenzy to the accompaniment of unearthly music, having put on red garments or wreaths, having his limbs multiplied or of having grown old and decrepit is inauspicious.

A patient who dreamt that he was anointed with oil, that he married, shaved his beard, ate cooked food or ghee, that he drank, vomitted or eased himself, would take a turn for the worse.

The dream of a black demoness with an ill-looking face, dishevelled hair, crooked nails and pendent breasts, wearing red garments, portends the death of the dreamer.

If a patient dreamt of sick persons, of ashes or lime, he would be cured of his ailment.

BAD DREAMS GENERALLY

Dreams of falling stars or planets, of earthquakes, hills splitting, of a man's entry into a forest filled with crimson flowers, his falling into a den of thieves, gamblers or drunkards are all inauspicious. So are dreams of red-eyed people, of naked savages, of swallowing live fish, or of wearing the rags of mendicants.

Gain of gold or iron in a dream is inauspicious.

The dream of one's quarrel, failure in an enterprise or confinement in a cell portends evil; so are dreams of shoes, teeth, and feet.

A dream in which a man sees grass, moss, plants or creepers grown over his body, except at the umbilicus, indicates evil; so is the dream of one having shaved his head, or moved about stark naked or clad in rags or insufficient clothes. The covering of one's head in bell-metal or bespattering of one's body in mud, seen in a dream, is also bad.

The dreaming of one's falling down a precipice, swinging in a hammock, or playing on a harp or any other stringed instrument augurs evil.

The dream of one's collecting pig iron ore, seeing a dead snake, a low caste man, or climbing a tree in bloom with red flowers portends danger; similarly dreams of one's riding on a boar, a dog, a donkey, a hog and a camel are harbingers of evil.

Dreams of earthquakes, sun and moon getting dislodged in their orbits and the falling of meteors forebode misfortune to the dreamer.

Eating of bird's meat, or of fare composed of rice, pulse, spice and oily substances, when seen in a dream, indicates evil effects.

Dreaming of a flagstaff broken into two is inauspicious.

The dream of a man having been converted into an embryo and again entering his mother's womb indicates sickness.

The dream in which a man sees himself drowned in a river or ascending a funeral pyre forebodes injury.

The man who fancies himself as bathing in cold water or cowdung water or water containing a solution of the five substances known as Panchodaka, in a dream, will fall sick.

A dream in which a man travels in a southerly direction, contracts an incur-

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able disease, picks red berries, sweeps the floor with a broom, sports with demons, monsters or apes, is indicative of disease and death.

The dream of fornication or unnatural offence forebodes evil to the dreamer.

The dream of a long journey through forests haunted by ghosts in an evening, the sky threatening rain, is inauspicious; a woman so dreaming will become a widow within a month, and a sick man will take a turn for the worse and die.

If a woman dreams that while going through a field on a clear morning a bull chased her, she will lose her youngest child; a man so dreaming will be bed-ridden in a month's time.

A woman dreaming that robbers broke into her house, tied her down and took away all the moveable property, will meet with violence ere long; for a man such a dream indicates loss of property.

If a man dreams that while taking his meal, his child threw a glass at him and blinded him in the left eye, he will have to leave his house in a year's time and be indebted to creditors without any hope of release.

The dream of monkeys invading the orchards of a man means loss of property.

A man dreaming of revelry in caves, filled with precious stones, will lose his wealth; a woman so dreaming will lose her ornaments.

For a woman to dream that a cobra crept into her bed and started dancing with its hood spread out, is a bad omen; its evil effect can be prevented by feeding ten mendicants.

The dream of a funeral procession indicates the death of a friend in a foreign country or of a brother.

The dream of a meteor falling on a house indicates that the house will be gutted, or that the owner will leave the house.

If a man dreams that he has gone blind, he may be deserted by his friends, or his wife may commit adultery.

A man dreaming that his wife always nags him and does things contrary to his directions, will live to see the loss of fortune of his wife, and her misery.

If a person dreams that the cot in which he or she slept caught fire, it indicates the impending illness of the spouse of the dreamer.

If a man dreams that his kitchen had caught fire, it portends the death of a close woman relative.

A ruler dreaming of a large-scale fire destroying a town or village, indicates the devastation of that village or town by epidemics or famine.

A person dreaming that while drinking water the vessel got upset, will hear the bad news of the death of some intimate friend.

The dream of black soil is inauspicious.

The dream of written files of paper, playing cards or old shoes augurs evil.

The dream of a brood of snakes in the house and the inmates screaming in terror, indicates death in the house within a month.

The dream of wild elephants, and of children being stamped to death by them, indicates the outbreak of epidemics.

If a man dreamt that his child was caught by a bear, and his wife fought with the beast, his wife may expect difficult labour in her next confinement.

A man dreaming that a young girl sat near him and made love to him, will be let down by the girl he courts.

If a man dreams that his wife was entertaining paramours in his house and was talking of him contemptuously to them, he will, without delay, suffer great agonies.

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The dream of injury by fireworks will involve the dreamer in a court case within forty-one days.

If a man dreams that he saw a woman plastering the floor of his house with cow-dung, he will be shortly robbed of his wealth.

Dreams of fire, occasionally, are good, but dreaming of fire for several nights in succession is inauspicious.

Dreams of heavy rainfall indicate the outbreak of epidemics.

If a person dreams that he had removed his clothes for a bath, but had again put them on without bathing, it indicates that he will, before long, quarrel with his relatives but eventually make up.

Dreaming of lightning indicates impending danger.

Dreaming of a dog is the forerunner of poverty.

The dream of one's own injury on the head caused by a sharp weapon is indicative of danger to life, while the dream of a big black cobra portends one's own or a relative's death.

AUSPICIOUS DREAMS

Dreams of gods, Brahmins and cows, bulls, princes, living friends, blazing fire, brooks, beautiful girls, handsome boys, and demons with effulgent forms are lucky.

He who dreams that he obtained an umbrella, mirror or poison is lucky.

If a man dreams that he climbed a tree laden with fruit, ascended a hill, tower or a high building, that he rode on the shoulders of a man, a horse, bull or lion, or that he crossed a river, sea or lake, it indicates long life, acquisition of wealth and enjoyment of health.

Dreams of one's own death through natural causes are indicative of release from a prison.

The dream of receiving a woman unworthy of his attention, congratulations by celestials or parents, of rising from a fall or of beating up of enemies is auspicious.

A dream in which the dreamer finds himself possessing many limbs and heads or grey hairs, or finds himself dressed in white garments adorned with garlands of white flowers, augurs good fortune.

Visions of eclipses, or the fall of one's enemies, victory in a quarrel, gain in gambling, getting drenched in rain or taking possession of a plot of ground, are all auspicious.

Dreams of eating raw meat, drinking fresh blood, wine, spirituous liquors or bathing in blood are harbingers of good fortune.

So are dreams of sword-fight and fencing, of sucking the udder of a cow, mare or cow-elephant.

Visions of benediction by gods, Brahmins or venerable elders are auspicious.

The dream in which a person finds himself dropped from the moon, fancies himself decapitated or installed on a throne, is auspicious, and indicates kingship.

A dream in which a person sees the destruction of his own house by fire or receives rewards from the king, are highly auspicious.

The dream of a clear sky, of a tree bending down with the burden of fruits or of one's body being anointed with ghee, is auspicious.

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A man dreaming that he visited a woman standing in a forbidden degree of consanguinity to him, will soon receive happy news.

The dream of the rising sun is auspicious and indicates the birth of a son.

The dream of the setting sun, while inauspicious for a man, indicates the birth of a daughter for a woman.

If a man dreams that, while going on a journey, he met a beautiful girl and spoke to her, he will marry a fair maiden and obtain much wealth by way of dowry.

A criminal, accused of a culpable act, will be acquitted, if he dreams that his head had been scorched by the midday sun.

The dream of the full moon indicates the birth of a daughter.

If a pregnant woman dreams that the sun has a shadow, she will give birth to a son who will make her house famous.

The dream of lightning and thunder in *a clear sky* indicates prosperity and happiness; merchants will have gain of wealth, a married person will become a proud parent, and unmarried persons will soon get married.

Dreaming of an unknown person walking about in an unknown place means foreign travel; similarly, the dream of the capsizing of the boat in which one crosses a river or other water-barrier, indicates an overseas journey.

A man dreaming that he had taken part in a stage show or other theatrical performance will soon get promotion; a woman so dreaming will give birth to a daughter.

If a man dreams that he had drunk a cup of milk, he will get a very favourable reception on his approaching a superior.

If a man dreams of the death of an intimate friend, he will soon hear very happy news.

The dream of Paradise is indicative of imminent fame; so also is a dream of having held pleasant commerce with the shades of the departed.

If a man dreams of obtaining land as a gift, he will shortly marry a very desirable girl.

The dream of a marriage procession indicates, for a man, the fine situation he had been looking for; such a dream by a woman, whose husband is away, indicates his imminent return.

If a person dreams of a fisherwoman carrying a basket of fish, he is sure to obtain wealth.

The man who dreams that his house was destroyed by a wild elephant, will soon build a house.

The dream of a grass-cutter with a bundle of fresh grass is auspicious.

The man who dreams that a snake-charmer made a cobra dance before him, will, within a year, become a great literary figure or artist.

If a young man dreams that he saw a lovely girl clad in white clothes going to a temple, he will shortly get married and obtain large sums of money by way of dowry.

The man who dreams that he stood by the sea-shore, enjoying himself the sea-breeze, will come by unexpected wealth.

The dream of one's having lit a lamp indicates increase in the family members; but the dream of a lit lamp brought to an assembly is indicative of fame.

If a man dreams that his house caught fire but did not emit smoke, he will gain much wealth and enjoy royal favour.

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A man dreaming of a voyage will get a desirable job; the dream of muddy water or water-weeds indicates gain of wealth.

The dream of a clock or of bells ringing indicates the birth of a son or recovery from illness.

Dreams of flowering plants or trees in blossom indicate gain of children.

He who dreams of having played with a ball will recover from an illness, and be happy.

The man who dreams of having worn new shoes will enjoy a fresh maiden.

He who dreams of a mirror will become rich if he is poor, but poor if he happens to be rich.

If a man, who has buried wealth, dreams of faded flowers, he will not get caught, but if of fresh flowers, he will be found out.

The man who dreams that he smelt fragrant flowers will enjoy a maiden.

The man who dreams that a river flowed by his house, will get promotions, form desirable friendships or hear very good news.

The dream of a waterfall indicates the removal of a long-standing complaint.

A man dreaming that he was benighted and fell down in the dark would soon be rid of the dangers that had beset him.

If a man dreams that he climbed the roof of a Gopuram (temple gate), a steep hill, or a high wall, he will become famous.

Dreaming of an elephant indicates acquisition of wealth and fame.

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15. Good and Bad Omens

The Hindus have great faith in omens. Medieval and ancient Hindu kings had regular omen-readers, and before undertaking an enterprise, such as starting on an expedition, contracting military alliances or building forts, palaces and temples, omens were consulted by experts; the Moghul emperors too had official omen-readers, and Jehangir was a firm believer in the efficacy of omens to indicate future events. Even now the generality of Hindus have great faith in omens, and many would abandon an enterprise or a journey if forbidden by omens.

Omens are generally read from the flight of birds, the noise they make, the appearance of reptiles, animals or humans, and their behaviour, the howls of dogs and jackals, etc. The most important creature in the matter of foretelling the future is, according to the Hindus, the wall-lizard, and its fall, twittering and appearance in unexpected places are studied carefully; in fact, an elaborate literature is available on the ominous potentialities of the movements of the wall-lizard and it has developed into the stature of a science among the Hindus and is known as *Gowli Sastra* (science of the wall-lizard).

ILL OMENS GENERALLY

If a person starting on a journey sees, immediately on starting, a Chandala (outcaste), treacle, a Sal tree, men with shaven heads, a person who has anointed his body for an oil bath, a naked person, hides or hair of animals, a mad man, a eunuch or scrap iron, the journey should not be continued; similarly, a pregnant woman, a widow, a butcher or fowler portends ill-luck to a man starting on a journey.

Husks of grain, ashes, skeletons, bones, broken pots, sounds of musical instruments except the Raga (melody-mode) Bhairava are inauspicious for a man who goes out on business.

Terms of dissuasion such as "Stay, don't go," "What's the good of your going there?", etc., used accidentally by friends or relatives at the time of starting a journey are inauspicious.

A peacock seen by a person to his left or in front, at the start of a journey, is good, but a shrill note or loud cry of the bird indicates robbery by highwaymen.

A deer or boar crossing the path of a man, from right to left, augurs evil, but their bounding, whatever the direction, is ominous.

A monkey or bullock bounding away from a person forebodes evil. Vixen eating, snarling or quarrelling over a carcass are neutral; but the howl of fox, either single or upto a number of four, is auspicious and that of five, evil; seeing seven foxes is good, but a greater number is ominous.

The man who, at the time of the start of his journey, sees a crow, which caws as if blessing him, is sure to accomplish the purpose of his journey, but a hostile or hoarse caw indicates the frustration of his efforts.

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116. A TEMPLE DANCER
(*From* Belur. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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117. THE COUCH OF LOVE (*GITA GOVINDA*)
(*From* N. C. Mehta's *Studies in Indian Painting*)

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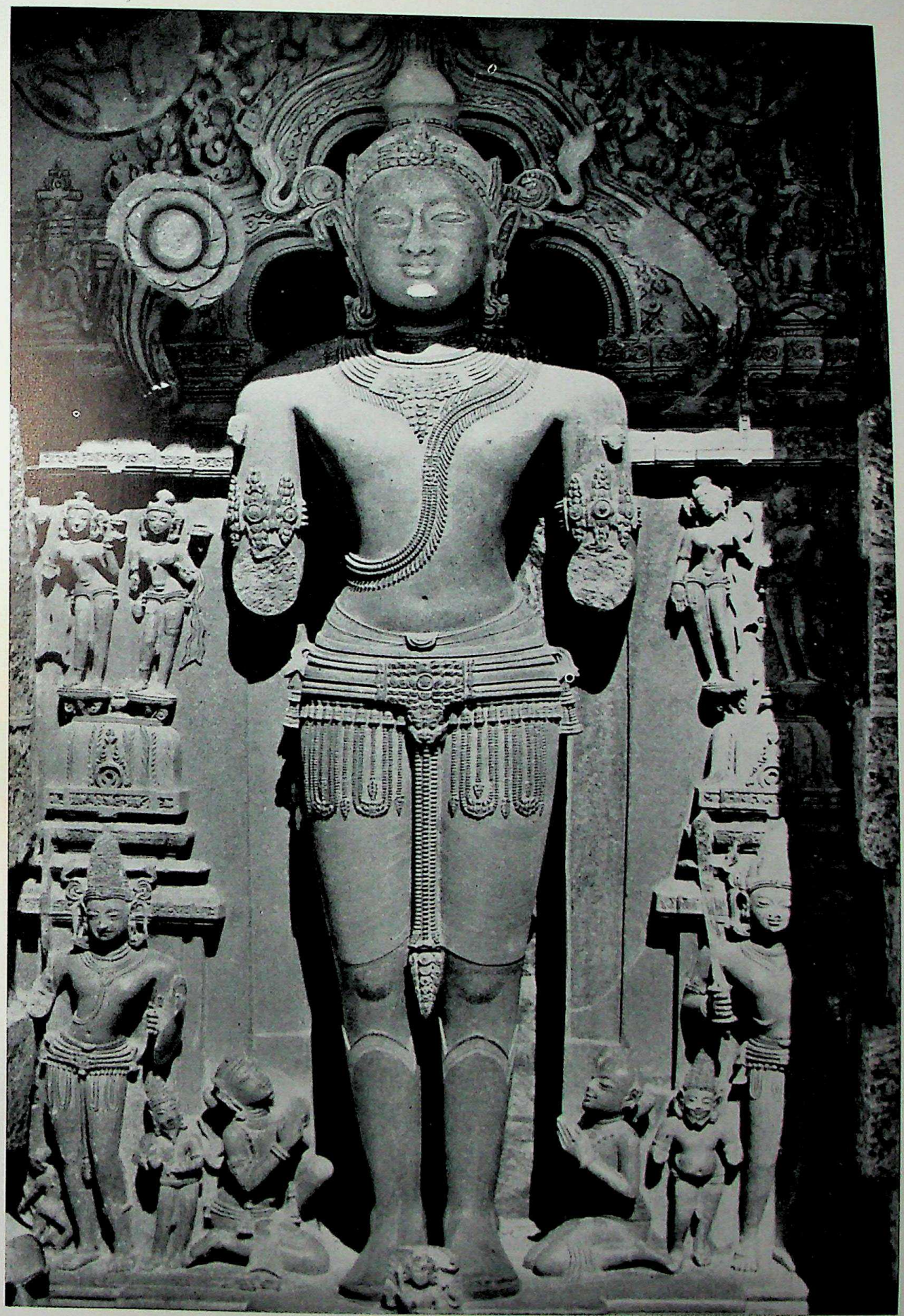

118. SUN GOD
(*From* Konarak. *Photo:* Raj Bedi)

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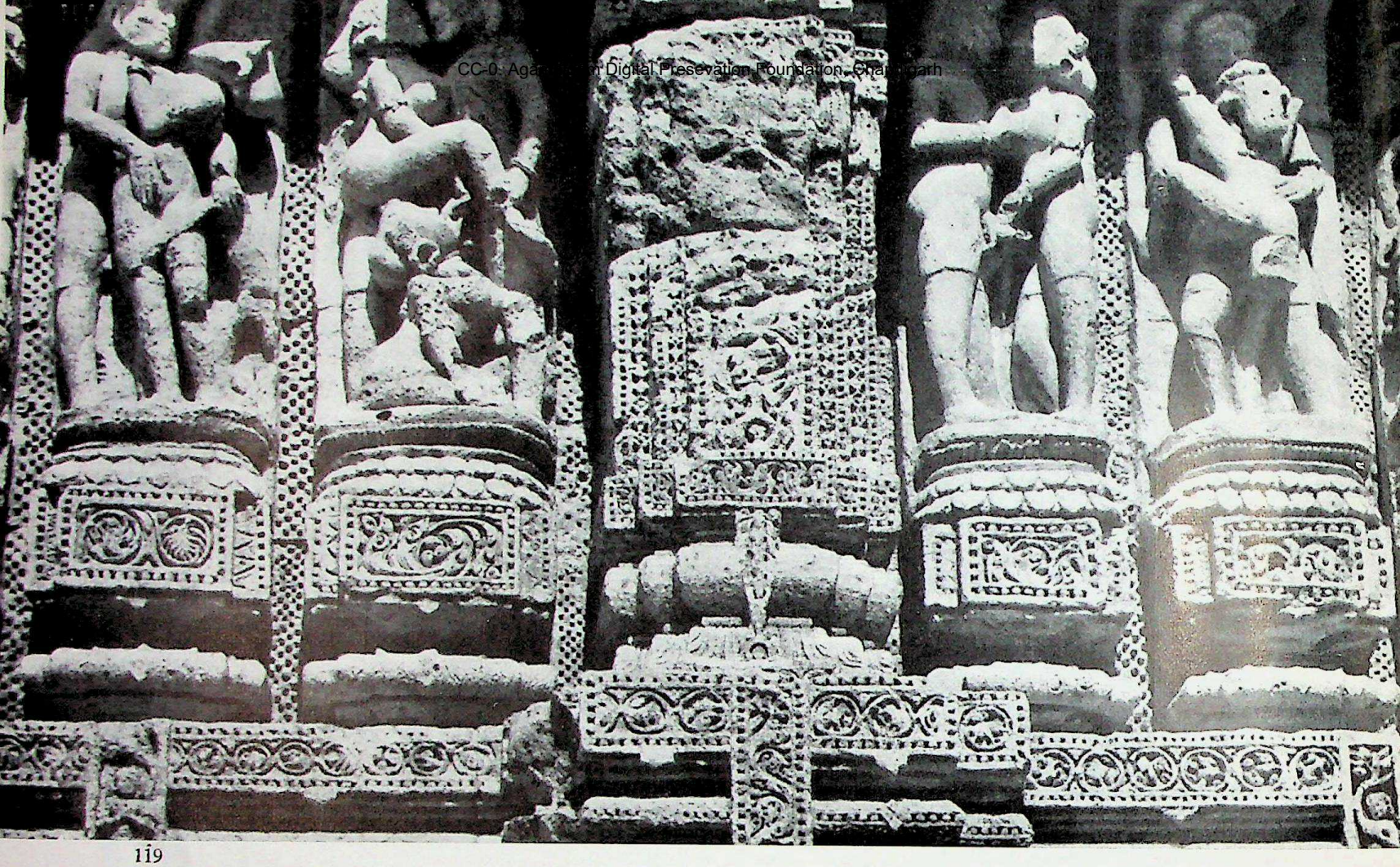

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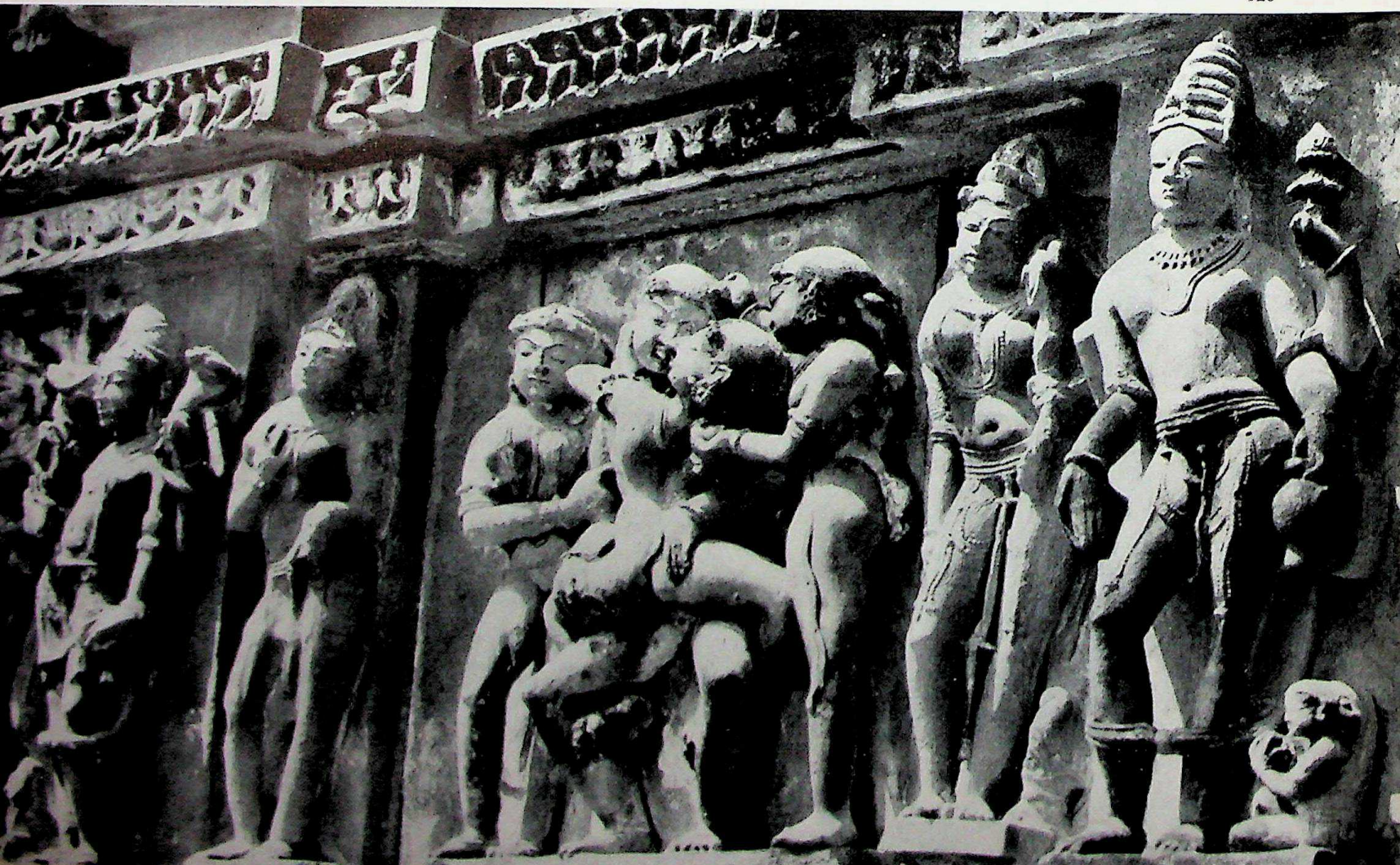

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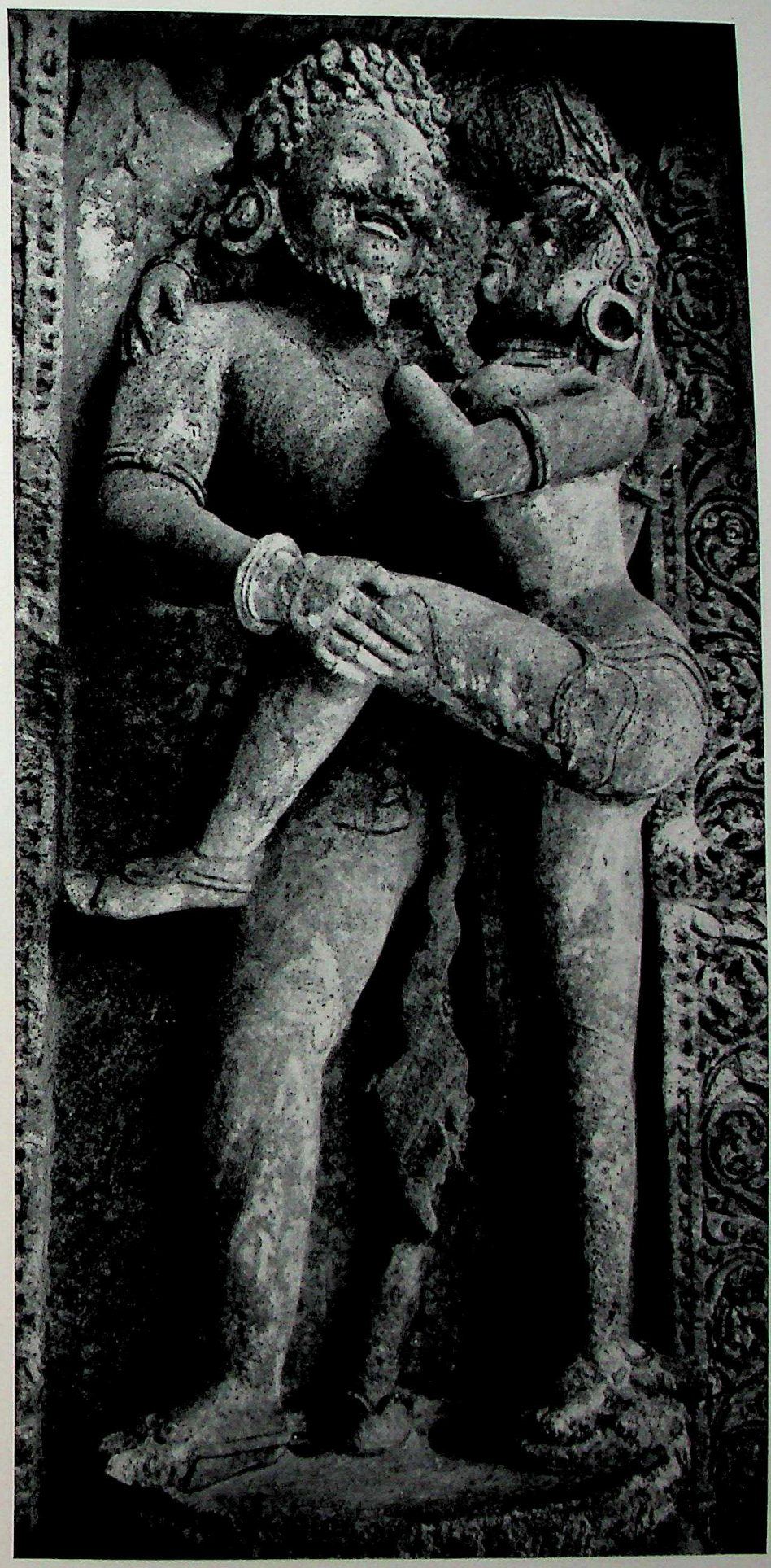

119. EROTIC SCENES
(*From* Konarak. *Photo*: R. J. Chinwala)

120. MAITHUNA FIGURES
(*From* Khajuraho. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

121. EROTIC SCULPTURES
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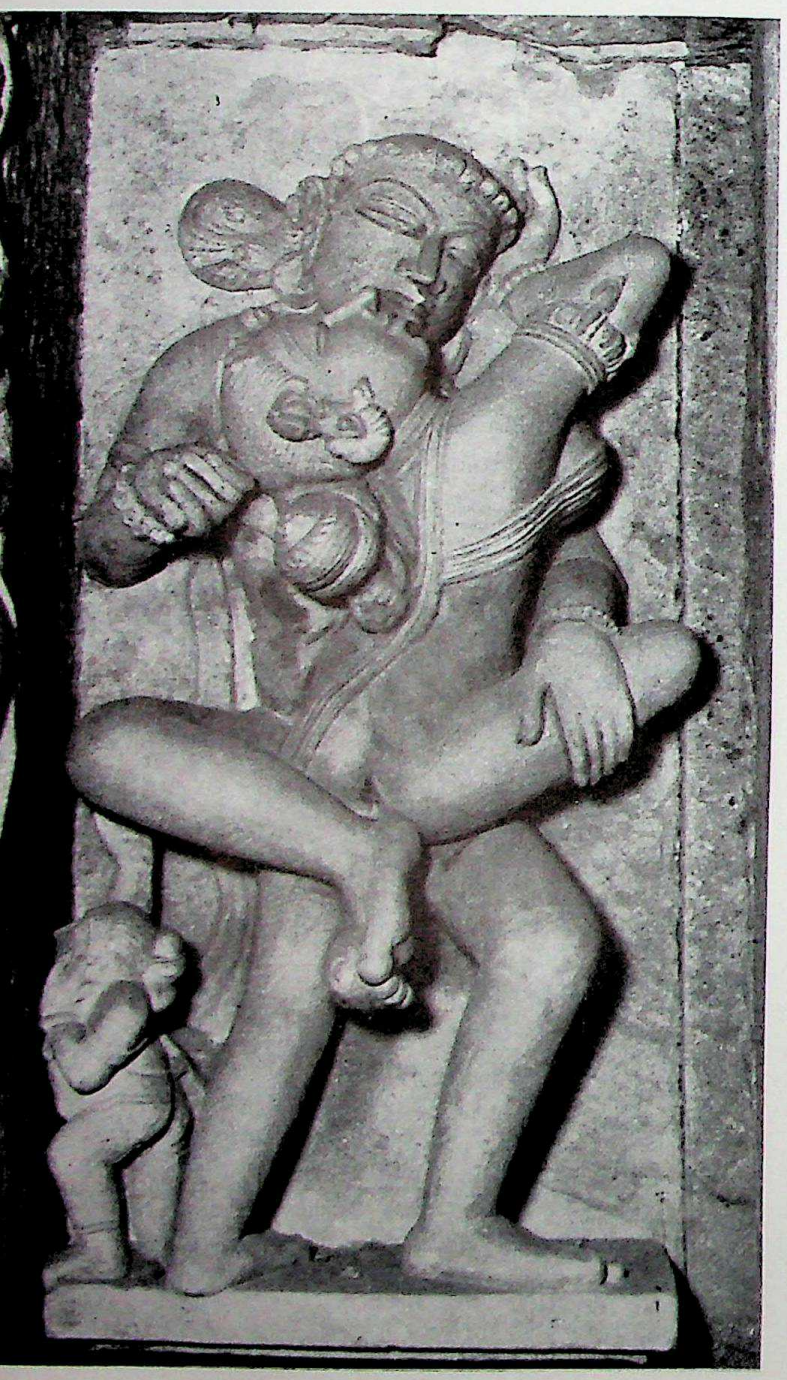

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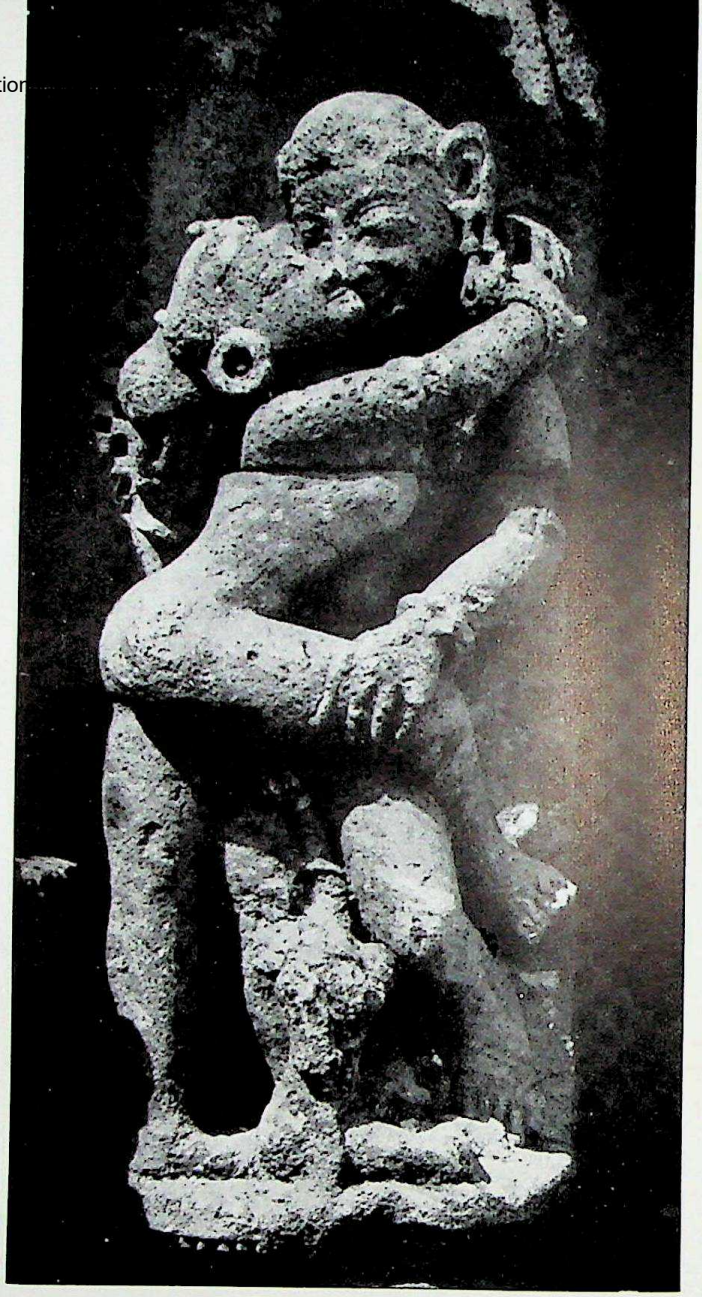

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122. AN AMOROUS COUPLE
(*From* Khajuraho: *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

123. A SMILING COUPLE
(*From* Konarak. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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124. A LOVE POSE
(*From* Khajuraho. *Photo*: Moti Ram Jain)

125. MAITHUNA FIGURES
(*From* Khajuraho. *Photo*: Sham Kilanjar)

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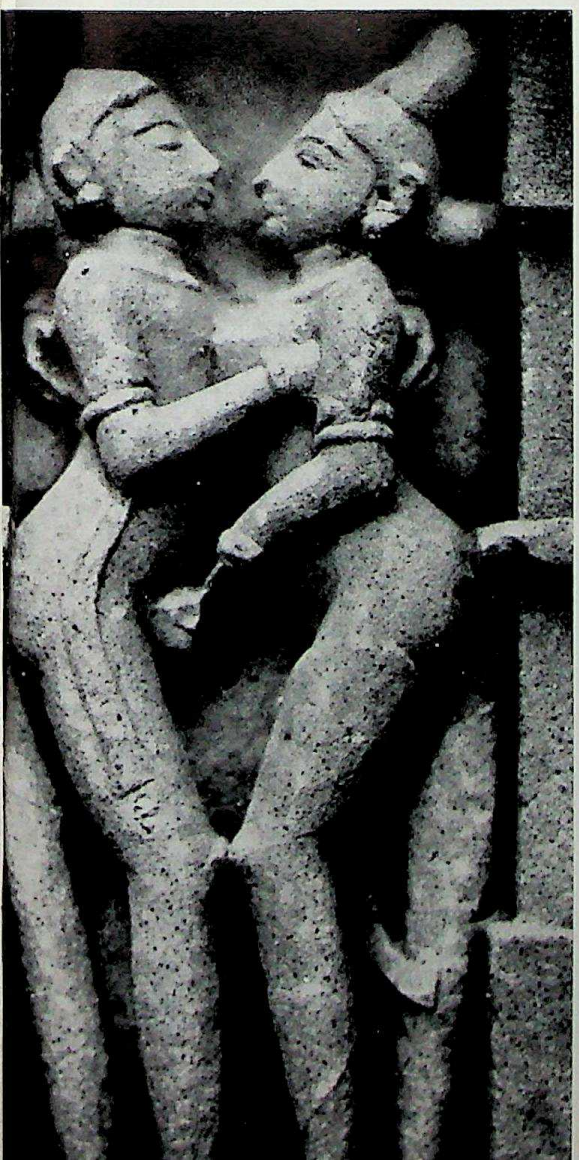

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126. A COUPLE IN MAITHUNA POSE (*From* Konarak. *Copyright*: Department of Archaeology, Government of India)

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A crow cawing to the right augurs evil. A crow following a man on his right shall not be considered dangerous, though it is not a very good omen.

A crow resting on one leg and looking at the sky with one eye, forebodes danger.

A crow entering the crevice or a gap in the wall of a house, when seen by a man planning a journey, augurs danger.

A crow with frost-bitten wings is a bad omen.

A dog howling in a sick man's chamber predicts his death.

A dog approaching a man from the front, while he is about to start a journey, indicates abortive results of the journey, while its obstructing his path indicates that the road ahead is infested with thieves.

A dog holding in its mouth a piece of bone, rag, rope, loose hair or any other filth should be deemed inauspicious. A dog passing urine while leading the way of a traveller indicates danger ahead.

A black cat crossing one's path is a very bad omen.

All excited chirping of birds augurs evil while gentle cooings and twitter are auspicious.

A nightbird screeching during day and a daybird at night, are bad. Any unnatural behaviour of birds should be deemed ominous; for instance, a bird habitually carnivorous found eating grass or a non-carnivorous bird eating carrion.

A bear, a mole, a jackal, a tiger, lion or cat scudding away in a direction opposite to the one a man is walking, is a bad omen.

A mule braying violently, and a partridge seen on the sides or at the back of a person are auguries of evil.

The man whose shadow, vehicle, or garments a raven pecks is likely to die shortly.

A red, burnt or charred substance dropped on a house by a crow indicates the destruction of the house by fire. Anything red dropped by a crow in front of a person indicates his incarceration at no distant date.

A dog smelling the left hand or the right side of the body of a man is ominous.

The lowing of a cow without apparent cause predicts trouble for her master; at night it indicates the presence or imminent advent of thieves. The mournful wailing of a cow is ominous and foretells death in the house at no distant date.

A cow eating filth, or anything not natural to her species, or not taking to her calf indicates a miscarriage in the family of her master.

A horse accidentally plunging into water or tumbling on the ground foretells bad days for his master. A horse sleeping without cause at the time of grazing or strolling, is indicative of some untoward incident happening.

The sudden aversion shown by a horse to barley or Modaka (composed of powdered barley, treacle, etc.) or its bleeding at the mouth without apparent cause, is an ill omen. A horse playing with a heron or pigeon augurs death. A horse licking his leg with his tongue, with tears in his eyes, is a warning of his own death.

A horse digging the earth with his left foreleg or sleeping in the day forebodes evil.

The copulation of elephants in a public place indicates the depopulation of the country.

GOOD OMENS GENERALLY

Cereals, paddy, cotton, hay, cow-dung, and coins are auspicious, and when seen by a man on the start of a journey ensure the success of his mission.

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A deer or boar crossing the path of a man from left to right is auspicious.

A bull, a horse, a jackal, a tiger, a lion or an ass, passing from the right to the left of a person is auspicious.

The cry of a heifer, of a hare, of an alligator, or the hissing of a snake heard by a man on the start of a journey is auspicious.

A peacock seen by a person on his left or in front at the time of the start of a journey predicts the success of the errand.

Yellow or white substances dropped by a crow at the threshold of a house indicate gain of gold or silver for the owner of the house.

Anything brought into the house by a crow (except those with good or bad indications) generally means gain and things taken away, loss.

The sight of a crow eating raw meat in a man's presence indicates his acquiring wealth, while bits of clay or glittering stones dropped by the crow in a house predict gain of landed property.

A crow cawing to the left of a man starting on a journey augurs luck; similarly a crow accompanying a man on the left is a good omen.

The sight of a crow with wings bespattered with mud is always auspicious.

A crow seen with his beak filled with filth is one of the best omens possible, and when seen by a man starting on a journey to a distant land, it will lead to the realisation of all his ambitions and plans.

A dog carrying a shoe or meat in its mouth is a happy augury.

A dog following a man and urinating at holy places, against sacred plants or substances is a good omen.

A bullock bellowing at night is auspicious.

An ox breaking his tether and roving at night brings good fortune to his master.

A cow appearing cheerful and energetic, in a drenched state, digging earth with her fore-hoofs and bounding in joy, with loose earth or mud on her horns, foretells the advent of better days for her master.

An elephant crossing its left foreleg with the right, or entwining its trunk round its right tusk brings good luck to its owner.

OMENS FOR KINGS AND RULERS

A king returning from a journey should enter his palace after looking at the following, which are all auspicious for kings:

White flowers, filled water-pots, meat, fish, an old man, a goat, a cow, a horse, an elephant, images of gods, a lighted fire, bunches of green grass, a beautiful courtesan, silver, gold, gems, sun-dried rice, swords and other weapons, an umbrella, a throne, insignia of royalty generally, a dead body carried without mourners, fruits, clarified butter, curds, milk, a mirror, a conch-shell and sugar cane.

Distant thunder and panegyrics sung by poets are also auspicious for kings.

The sweeping down of ravenous birds on the banner is inauspicious for an army starting on an expedition.

Making a false step by an animal of the royal chariot or other vehicle, breaking of weapons, slipping of wearing apparel, falling down of umbrellas, are all bad omens.

His head accidentally striking against a door-frame is a bad omen for a king starting on an expedition.

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A deer seen by an invading army on its arrival in the enemy's territory predicts victory for the army.

Misfortune and catastrophe are indicated by the agitated cawing of a raven fluttering on the left of a marching army.

Dogs howling to the right of the royal camp, or in front of a temple dedicated to Indra, or at the main entrance to the palace, indicate the death of Brahmins, the king or the royal steward.

A horse that passes urine out of fright, looks drowsy without apparent cause, becomes restive when saddled, or frantically turns homeward when mounted, indicates reverses in battle. A horse biting its left side is also indicative of bad luck.

A horse that bravely neighs at the sight of the enemy, digs the earth with his forelegs and madly rushes into the enemy line at the touch of reins predicts victory.

A cow-elephant, newly delivered of her young and gone mad, augurs the death of the king. Likewise, an elephant that resents trappings being put on, runs in a contrary direction when ridden upon, with ichor or seasonal secretions at the temple, foretells the death of the sovereign.

A bull, horse or elephant breaking through the enemy's line should be deemed a good omen.

A passing cloud suddenly breaking forth into showers in an otherwise clear sky indicates the destruction of the whole army.

The east, the west, the north and north-east are auspicious directions for an army to march; south is particularly inauspicious.

OMENS TO BE READ BY PHYSICIANS FROM MESSENGERS

An Ayurvedic physician does not always visit his patients for treatment nor can they be brought to him in all cases. The main barrier that stands between a physician and his patient is caste. Physicians, as a rule, belong to the higher castes and as such they cannot visit houses of patients of low castes; nor can an outcaste or low caste patient be brought to the house of the physician as this would mean pollution of the physician's house. In such cases, a messenger is generally sent to the physician and he describes the ailment in detail to the physician who writes prescriptions for the patient. Even in cases in which a physician can visit a patient, a messenger is first sent to him.

In addition to what the messenger relates, his appearance, behaviour, etc., are supposed to convey certain mysterious information to the physician as regards the condition and illness of the patient. A whole section of *Ashtanga Hridaya*, a medieval treatise on medicine written by one Vaghbhata, deals with Duta Lakshana or omens from messengers. The *Ashtanga Hridaya* is even now the main textbook on Ayurveda, especially in South India, and the system at present successfully competes with Allopathy in many parts of India. As such Duta Lakshana is a living science in India and the following passages are taken at random from the Duta Lakshana section of the *Ashtanga Hridaya*.

If the messenger is excited, carries a weapon or cannot talk properly because of fear, the omen is bad and the physician should not accompany him to the patient.

A eunuch or woman is a messenger of evil. A messenger coming riding on an ass, camel or buffalo forebodes the death of the patient. A single man is a better messenger than one accompanied by an assistant.

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A man with matted locks or completely shaven, a sick man, a cripple, a dirty-looking man wearing torn, old or wet clothes, a man with an unpleasant name, are all messengers of evil.

A man wearing a red garland, or one with a red caste mark indicates that the patient's condition is past hope.

A messenger of the same caste and occupation as the patient is the best to convey the news of the ailing to the physician. Any other is inauspicious. A Brahmin, for instance, bringing news of sickness of a Sudra or *vice versa* is bad.

The arrival of the messenger when the physician is making love or scolding some one, when he is naked or anointed with oil, when he is cutting a cucumber or performing ceremonies for the departed, or when he is ceremonially unclean, indicates approaching death of the patient.

If a messenger, while describing the illness of the patient to the physician, happens to scratch his nose, navel, cheek, head, private parts, back, breast, neck, belly or ring-finger, it portends death of the patient. Similarly, his touching, with hand or foot, cotton, husks, lead, bone, straw, cudgel, granite, broom, winnowing fan, rim, border or end of his clothes, a rope or shoe, indicates that the condition of the patient is very serious.

The arrival of the messenger in the physician's house at midnight, midday, or in twilight is inauspicious. Similarly, his arrival at the time of Rahu* is an ill omen. Nor should prescriptions be written during Rahu Kalam.

If the messenger, while describing the patient's condition, mentions *inter alia* red chilies, fire, corpse, ropes or bondage, it is a warning that the physician should not accompany the messenger to visit the patient.

If, on the arrival of the messenger, the physician hears pitiful wails, threatening or vulgar language from any quarter, the omen is bad.

If, while proceeding to a patient's house, the physician loses, on the way, any of his garments, umbrella or sandals, the omen is bad; so is the sight on the road of a man in sorrow, a ruined temple or a filled pot breaking, or the fall of ashes or dust on his body. A snake, cat, lizard, chameleon or monkey crossing the physician's path is ominous. His seeing, on the road, black grain, jaggery, butter-milk, salt, liquor, hides, mustard, oil, grass bundles, firewood, muddy water, a wicked or low-born man, a fisherman's or fowler's net, vomitted food, human excreta, anything emitting stench, an upturned cot, stool or bench, or pots kept mouth down, is also a bad omen.

Herds of cattle, goat or sheep or birds are good omens.

Packs of dogs and foxes are bad, but a single dog or fox is good.

An owl, cat or chameleon is bad.

The grunting of a pig, the hissing of a snake or the bark of a wild dog when heard is good, but the sight of any of them is inauspicious.

The sight of a monkey, on the other hand, is auspicious but the noise it makes, when only heard, is bad.

If the physician on approaching the house of the patient or entering the gateway, meets with any of the folllowing, it is indicative of the patient's recovery:

Curds, sugar cane, peas, honey, ghee, lac, sandal paste, a golden vessel, bell,

* Certain parts of the day are known as Rahu Kalam or periods of Rahu (for the origin of Rahu, see Ch. 18) and are held inauspicious, especially in South India. The time is, however, good for thieving, murders and other evil enterprises. The periods of Rahu are: Sunday, 4.30 to 6 p.m.; Monday, 7.30 to 9.00 a.m.; Tuesday, 3.00 to 4.30 p.m.; Wednesday, 12.00 to 1.30 p.m.; Thursday, 1.30 to 3.00 p.m.; Friday, 10.30 to 12.00 noon; and Saturday, 9.00 to 10.30 a.m.

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lamp, water-lily, fish, meat, precious stones, an elephant, a filled vessel, a maiden, a prosperous man, a prince, white flowers, a yak tail fan, a white horse, a conch, a flagstaff, a turban, the sign of the Swastika, a blazing fire, good food, a cart laden with men and women, a cow with her calf, a sweet-voiced parrot, a mare with heifer, a woman with her child, swans, a cow tethered to a post, bangles, mirror, fragrance, bellowing of a bull or cow, an umbrella, a flag, instrumental music, the repetition of Vedic texts and a cool breeze.

GOWLI-SASTRA OR THE SCIENCE OF THE WALL-LIZARD

No animal, bird or reptile has been so well observed and studied by the Hindus as the wall-lizard. Each kind of wall-lizard portends particular events, and the colour, spots, stripes, and above all, its chirping or twittering, and fall on the different parts of the body of a person, are all indicative of future happenings. The literature on the subject, as already stated, is quite considerable, and the reading of omens based on the wall-lizard is reckoned a science among the Hindus.

The moon has particular astral bearing on the lizard and each day of the lunar fortnight indicates certain general tendencies. On the first day, the fall of the lizard denotes fame; on the second, gain of lands; on the third, fulfilment of work undertaken; on the fourth, health; on the fifth, sixth and seventh, gain of wealth; on the eighth, ninth and tenth day, danger and death; on the eleventh, birth of a son; on the twelfth, prosperity; on the thirteenth, obstacles to undertakings; on the fourteenth, loss of wealth; and on the Full Moon and New Moon days, loss of friends and property.

Again, on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the fall of a lizard is generally indicative of gain and prosperity, and on Sunday, Tuesday and Saturday, losses.

Various expiatory ceremonies are prescribed and charity to Brahmins recommended in order to cancel the evil effects indicated by the fall of lizards.

The following are some of the omens to be read from the fall or chirping of lizards:

If, at the time of departure of a person from his house, a lizard chirps from above, it foretells gain of wealth.

A lizard's fall on the head of a man indicates possession of an estate; on the forehead, meeting with a close relative; on the eyebrow, kings's favour; on the upper lip, loss of money; on the lower lip, possession of wealth and authority; on the eye, imprisonment; on the right arm, king's favour; on the left arm, royal displeasure; on the breast, bad luck; on the belly, good luck; on the hand, gain of clothes; on the shoulders, success; on the navel, much wealth; on the waist, gain of horses and cattle; on the right wrist, loss of wealth; on the left wrist, increase of fame; on the nails, gain of wealth; on the mouth, palatable food; on the hair, death; on the right leg, travel; on the left leg, loss of near relative; at the middle of the foot, loss of wife.

At the time of the departure of a person, the chirping of the lizard from the east denotes success; from the south-east, fear; from the south, loss of friend; from the south-west, death; from the west, profit; from the north-west, palatable food; from the north, profit; from the north-east, success; if the lizard chirps from the ground, it indicates danger, and from above, gain of wealth. These are the indications of the lizard's chirping from the ten directions.

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The fall of a lizard with a bluish tint, near the right eye of a person, on a Thursday, is a good omen; near the left eye, it augurs evil.

If a lizard with a golden tint falls on the right ear of a person on a Sunday, it indicates longevity; on the left ear, gain of wealth and fulfilment of one's desires.

If a lizard, with a whitish colour, black spots and a lost tail, falls on the eyebrow of a person it indicates loss of wealth, but on the centre of the brow, gain.

If a grey lizard falls on the right side of a man's nose, he will be afflicted with various maladies; if on the left side, the man will suffer many things from many people and if, on the tip of the nose, he will immediately fall sick.

The fall of a black lizard on the right cheek on a Saturday or Sunday, indicates increasing wealth and happiness.

The fall of a red lizard on the upper lip of a person on a Friday denotes loss of property and agony of mind; on the nether lip, success; on the mouth, a sumptuous feed.

If a white lizard, without tail, falls on the chin of a man on a Tuesday, he will suffer death or persecution.

The fall of a light blue lizard on the front of the neck of a person on a Wednesday, denotes good company and good cheer; on the back of the neck, danger from enemies.

If a lizard of golden colour falls on one's chest on a Sunday or Thursday, and chirps in its fall, it indicates gain of wealth or successful termination of marriage negotiations.

If a white, tail-less lizard, with eight stripes on its back, falls on the hand of a person on a Tuesday or Friday, it indicates many misfortunes.

Fall of a lizard of light golden colour, with ten stripes on its back, on the right side of a man, on a Saturday or Monday, indicates gain and success; on the left side, failure and losses.

If a black lizard falls on one's back on a Sunday or Thursday, and starts chirping, the man will suffer bodily ailments.

The fall of a black lizard without tail, on one's stomach on a Monday or Thursday, is indicative of fame.

The fall of a black lizard on the palm of the hand on a Sunday denotes good fortune.

If a rose-tinted lizard with ten stripes on its back, falls on the breast of a woman, she will, that very night, sleep with the man she loves.

The fall of a grey lizard on a woman's navel on a Friday, denotes loss of cash; on her pubic region, death; on her thighs, loss of apparel.

If a black lizard falls on the ankle of a woman, it indicates loss of freedom; on the shin, death; on the knee, long journey.

The fall of a white lizard, without tail, on the foot of a person, on a Monday or Saturday, is indicative of physical pain and bodily ailments.

The fall of a lizard on one's bed is inauspicious, but its fall on a seat is auspicious.

The fall of a lizard in an empty vessel foretells the forging of new ties and friendships.

If a lizard falls in an assemblage of persons, it indicates the death of the leader or the president.

If it falls between two persons conversing, the fall indicates the death of the greater of the two.

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If a lizard falls on a lamp and puts it out in its fall, the omen is very bad; in a house, the omen indicates the destruction of the house by fire, and the inmates would be well advised to live away from the house for three months.

If a lizard falls on the lap of a woman, she is likely to be raped.

If a lizard falls on a weapon, the owner will win the quarrel he may be engaged in.

If a lizard falls on the stomach of a virgin, she will get married soon and become pregnant.

If a lizard falls on the right sole of a woman, she will be driven out of home and town.

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16. Auspicious and Inauspicious Marks

APART FROM palmistry, the study of which has been cultivated in India from very early times, the Hindus have evolved a system of foretelling the fortunes of a person from his appearance, gait, manner of speech, and, above all, certain lines and marks on the body. The science is known as Samudrika Sastra, and is even now assiduously studied all over India.

In interviewing candidates for appointments to positions of trust, seeing young men or women with a view to matrimony, etc., in ancient and medieval India services of experts in Samudrika Sastra were requisitioned and often their verdict was accepted as final. At present, public appointments are entrusted to other kinds of experts, no doubt, but in marriages the ancient science is still requisitioned by orthodox Hindus. Samudrika Sastra extends to the animal kingdom too, and there are several treatises on the desirable and undesirable types of horses, elephants, cows, bullocks, etc., which are even now consulted by Hindus who buy these animals.

A detailed description of Samudrika Sastra would take a full volume; for the study of the palm alone is capable of occupying a lifetime, not to say of other parts of the human anatomy. Hence all that is given below is the barest outline of Samudrika Sastra in relation to certain marks and lines appearing on several parts of the body.

MEN IN PARTICULAR

HEAD AND FACE

A big, straight head is of a leader of men. A head shaped like an umbrella indicates royalty. When the shape of the head is suggestive of Shiva's trident, it indicates royal honours, while a merely elongated head is indicative of misery.

A spherical head indicates riches, while a head shaped like a pitcher denotes low desires and poverty. A small head set on a short neck indicates loss of one's parents. A man with a head like a gabled roof is destined to be miserable.

Black, straight, thin hair indicates royalty. Uneven hair with gross tips portends evil; similarly tawny, bent down, thick or dark-blue hair is inauspicious. Men with kinked hair will die in a foreign country.

A round, bright face indicates happiness and contentment, and an elongated face an egotist.

A smooth, tender face is indicative of royalty, and its opposite, of indigence. A son possessing the face-cut of his mother is destined to be miserable. Those who have depressed faces are incapable of begetting sons. Misers have short faces, and the wicked sprawling faces.

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A brow, four fingers in width, is of the scholar and of two fingers, of a celebrity. Fools have brows less than two fingers in width. A clean brow without any lines indicates longevity upto the age of ninety; five lines on the brow denote life extending to the age of seventy.

A high brow ending in a shining bald head is of the lordly type of man. A crescent-shaped brow denotes wealth and fame, and a high narrow brow, skill in business. Rough brow, of an ugly shape, indicates meanness. A high spacious forehead is of the orator or a man of fame. A brow out of proportion to the nose and chin (these being smaller) indicates haughtiness and selfishness. A depressed brow is inauspicious. A conch-shaped, rugged forehead indicates poverty. Persons with sinewy foreheads develop a tendency towards sin. A high, triangular forehead indicates wealth. The wicked have depressed foreheads. A roundish forehead heralds the miser. A dry, unperspiring forehead is inauspicious. Expansive foreheads are expressive of happiness.

Three very long lines on the forehead indicate longevity for a hundred years; four ninety-five, and five, seventy. When the lines on the forehead are found broken, the man is of a licentious temperament.

If the lines on the forehead extend to the hair, the person lives for forty years; if to the eyebrows, fifty years or more.

Twenty lines on the forehead, bent towards the left, indicate longevity, but if the lines are short the life is likely to be of short span.

A person with slightly depressed cheeks enjoys all the luxuries of life. A man with well-formed cheeks will become a king's minister.

Long cheeks indicate cunning, and golden, thick-set cheeks, scholarship and passion. The man with sunken cheeks is unreliable.

Reddish tint in the eye indicates wealth whereas blood-red eyes are those of the wicked. Persons with cat's eyes are of low and mean habits. Elephant's eyes denote power and authority. Eyes with the colour of honey are auspicious. Persons with very big or very small eyes suffer from habitual sickness. Round eyes are cruel; sunken eyes denote prosperity and grey eyes harshness. If the portion of the eye inside the lid is reddish but outside, except the pupil, white like glass, it indicates learning, fame, wealth and happiness.

Persons having eyes like lotus-petals, with a quaint curve at the corners will enjoy all the luxuries of life. The crooked have squint, and the wicked tawny eyes; heroes have oblique eyes, ministers fleshy eyes, and kings grave eyes. Dark-blue eyes are auspicious.

Absence of eye-lashes is inauspicious. The eyes of the really learned are like the petals of the red lotus.

A steady look, without closing or shifting the eyes, indicates a man of strictness and perseverance. The man who shifts his eyes or looks elsewhere while talking is treacherous and unreliable. Sunken, ugly eyes indicate deceit. Thinkers have deep-set eyes. The man with half-open eyes is of clownish or unsocial habits.

Long eyebrows, distantly set, indicate wealth. The indigent have uneven eyebrows. A high eyebrow indicates a short life. Arched eyebrows show a love of literature and fine arts. Eyebrows with thick-set hair indicate wealth. Thick eyebrows indicate health, wealth, singleness of purpose and self-reliance. The man with drooping hair on the eyebrow is treacherous; rolling eyebrows, running together, indicate a spiteful, revengeful person or one who will leave his caste and community and live with others.

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Thin, narrow eyebrows indicate weakness; high eyebrows of medium thickness indicate power of observation; people with soft eyebrows are good-natured. Black, smooth eyebrows indicate a magnetic personality.

People with uneven eyebrows are destined to be poor. Long eyebrows not running together, indicate riches; so also are crescent shaped eyebrows.

The man who has a cut between the two eyebrows becomes indigent. Those who have bent-down eyebrows marry base women.

The thinker has thin ears; the dull and the unsuccessful have small, ugly ears. Square ears show pragmatic tendencies and roundish ears a love of aesthetics. If one of the ears of a man is bigger than the other he will be slandered, become deaf or lose his wealth. If the two ears are of different colour or of different shape, the man will lose his good name. Big ears indicate acquisition of wealth, flat ears, happiness, long ears, ill-temper and round ears, love of power.

Misers have short ears. Those with spear-like ears become kings. Those who have hairy ears are short-lived. Hanging and fleshy ear lobes are indicative of royalty.

If the tip of the nose is raised, it shows curiosity and a perpetual fear of failure in life. The man with a nose the tip of which is flat, is talkative, suffers from want of initiative and can be easily duped.

A nose with the tip bent upward indicates a love of litigation, and an aggressive temperament. A beaked nose indicates avarice and cunning, and a small nose, short temper. The hen-pecked have small noses. A big, fleshy, hanging nose indicates courage, manliness and intellectual gifts. Scholars and philosophers have big noses with wide nostrils.

A high-bridged nose indicates authority, efficiency and power of command. A long, slightly tilted nose indicates a quarrelsome nature and extravagance, while a lean straight nose shows longevity. The man with the nose bent inward will be wealthy.

A man with a nose like the beak of a parrot will be happy. He who has well-like nostrils, with the tip appearing broken, will marry a base woman.

The man who sneezes frequently will become powerful.

A big mouth is indicative of perpetual hunger and poverty, and a small one of contentment and happiness. A reddish mouth is auspicious and a black one is indicative of loyalty.

A long, thin, pink, soft tongue is auspicious, and a thick, large tongue inauspicious. A long line running in the centre throughout the length of the tongue indicates the scholar and orator, whereas many such lines grace the tongue of the linguist.

A tongue tinged blue is auspicious.

Thin lips show forethought and persistence. Thick lips are inauspicious. A long upper lip and a thin inverted nether lip indicate poverty. Small lips are generally preferable to big ones. Red lips are royal, and smiling, tender lips, resembling Vimba fruits, are auspicious. Those who have rugged lips are destined to be poor.

Sharp, even teeth or thick-set, cool teeth, are auspicious. Square teeth indicate poverty. Teeth distantly set denote passion.

An egg-shaped, pointed chin is of a brilliant man, an orator, intellectual or scholar. A square chin is indicative of tenacity of purpose, vigour and perseverance. A protruding chin denotes aggressive temperament. A depression on

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the chin indicates a love of independence and straightforwardness. A chin bent inwards denotes weakness. Men with round chins are passionate and cruel.

A spare chin indicates want, and a fleshy one, riches.

A pale palate indicates destruction of wealth.

Men with tender, thin, smooth beards will enjoy happiness and all the luxuries of life. Thieves have thick, short, crimson-coloured beards. A red, rugged beard announces the sinner.

NECK, BODY, ARMS AND PALMS

The indigent have lean, long necks. A pillar-shaped neck with a slightly prominent Adam's apple is auspicious. A wiry neck with a very prominent Adam's apple, in shape like a battle-axe, indicates misery.

Very prominent veins in the neck are inauspicious. Buffalo-neck indicates the hero and deer-neck the scholar.

Men with rugged collar bones are destined to be poor; those with high collar bones enjoy all the pleasures of life; plump collar bones indicate wealth and depressed ones, poverty.

Shoulders resembling those of the bull or elephant or those shaped like the plantain stem are auspicious.

The indigent have large sprawling arm-pits. Hollow arm-pits are indicative of wealth. Elevated arm-pits, both of equal size, are auspicious. Uneven, twisted arm-pits are indicative of royalty.

Fleshy arm-pits with the hair bent to the right are royal signs; the hair bent to the left indicates poverty.

The most auspicious arm-pit is one shaped like a fig-leaf, covered with brownish hair and smelling of scent.

Long hands, well-shaped and reaching up to the knees, denote royalty.

Hairy hands indicate generosity. Hands like those of the monkey are inauspicious. Arms shaped like the trunk of an elephant are auspicious. Short arms indicate poverty.

Wiry wrists, making a noise while turning, are inauspicious. Raised wrists denote longevity. Yellow wrists indicate poverty and dark ones, riches. Kings have well-formed, thick-set, sweet-smelling wrists.

Men with red hands and palms will become wealthy. Rough, yellowish palms indicate the adulterer. A hollow palm shows absence of paternal wealth, a raised palm, generosity, and a pale, bloodless palm, cruelty. Thieves have black palms and kings, palms tender like lotus petals.*

Three lines at the joint of wrist and palm are auspicious. The sign of Pisces on the palm indicates a great sacrificer; the sign of the thunderbolt, riches; the mark of the fish-tail, intellect; the sign of conch, umbrella, vehicle, elephant or lotus, kingship; the mark of the pitcher, goad or flag, possession of precious stones; the mark of a chord, kine; that of the Swastika, leadership; and that of the discus, sword, bow or tooth, heroism. The mark of a tank or triangle on the palm indicates righteousness.

Long fingers indicate longevity and prosperity; lean fingers, learning and thick fingers, poverty. The servile have flat fingers. Straight, well-joined fingers are auspicious, and crooked or bent fingers, evil.

* There are numerous books on Indian palmistry; readers interested in the subject will find *Sariraka Sastra* by V. A. K. Ayer and *Hast Samudrika Sastra* by K. C. Sen instructive.

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Persons with uneven fingers will pay heavy taxes. Fingers that make a sound when pressed are inauspicious. Knot-like, long marks on fingers indicate longevity. Disjoined, distant, fingers denote poverty.

Fleshy, well-shaped thumbs indicate good fortune, and bent or crooked ones, poverty. He who has the mark of barley on his thumb will become rich; when the mark is at the base of the thumb, the person will become rich in progeny.

Nails like husks indicate impotence. Men with rugged, broken nails are indigent, and those with discoloured, disfigured nails, inquisitive. Coppery, well-shaped nails denote kingship. Bent nails indicate servitude and soft nails like onion peels, lack of manliness.

Kings have high fleshy breasts that do not tremble, covered with hair bent downwards. A man with a plumb chest will become powerful and one with an even chest wealthy. Persons with uneven chests are destined to be indigent and are likely to suffer violent deaths. A broad, straight chest with firm muscles indicates greatness.

A back not covered with much hair, even in shape, indicates good luck while any other kind is inauspicious.

Men with a cool body enjoy the good things of life. A rough, sinewy body, devoid of flesh, is inauspicious and its opposite auspicious.

A stomach shaped like an inverted club, with the upper part narrow and the lower part like the knob of the club, indicates life-long hunger and poverty. A long serpentine belly denotes misery.

A belly with one fold indicates longevity, with two, happiness and three, royalty; four folds indicate birth of numerous sons. A broad, soft belly is auspicious. Broken lines on the belly and prominent veins are inauspicious. A belly shaped like a lotus in bloom, is auspicious. A fish-shaped belly is a sign of prosperity, so also is a pot-belly.

Soft hair on the belly, bent to the right, indicates greatness, and rough hair, bent to the left, misery.

A deep, large, fish-shaped navel is auspicious and indicates intellectual powers. Men with sprawling, low navels are destined to suffer much.

If there is a wrinkle-like line in the centre of the navel, it indicates violent death; if it is on a side, it is a sign of longevity; in equinoctial position it augurs the possession of cattle-wealth.

The mark of a pericarp of the lotus inside the navel heralds the king.

A wrinkle-like line bent downwards in the navel, is a good sign in a man who will come into possession of much kine.

Two wrinkles inside the navel indicate prosperity, and three, learning.

An awry wrinkle inside the navel denotes that the man possessing it will associate with women unworthy of himself.

An elevated navel indicates a short life. Two hairs in the navel are auspicious, three inauspicious.

LOINS, BUTTOCKS, GENITALS AND LEGS

A leonine waist indicates kingship and a monkey-waist, poverty. A thick, rough waist denotes cowardice.

A fat phallus indicates wealth, and a phallus with a knobbish end, excessive passion. A Lingam six fingers in length and shaped like a plantain is auspicious

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while one of nine fingers' length indicates the middling man, and of twelve, excessive sex urge. Hanging testes that touch the ground while squatting are auspicious.

The man with a big organ is destined to be poor; one with a very small one will become rich but have no children. The man who has testes of equal size will become a king. The wife of the man with unequal testes will be fickle. Longish testes indicate longevity.

Urine coming out in one or more lines towards the right is indicative of kingship. Men who pass urine in a scattered way will become indigent. The man whose urine comes out in a strong flow will obtain faithful wives.

Dry semen is indicative of poverty; semen smelling of the scent of any flower is indicative of kingship; of honey, riches. The smell of fish in semen is indicative of prolific progeny. The smell of meat in semen denotes the enjoyment of luxuries of life, of wine, priestly office, and of ashes, poverty. Scanty semen indicates greatness.

The man who finishes his love-making quickly lives long while those who linger on it are short-lived.

Thighs shaped like the trunk of an elephant are auspicious. Scanty hair on the thighs denotes happiness and prosperity.

A man with big buttocks will acquire much wealth. Fleshy buttocks denote happiness.

A knee-joint without much flesh is auspicious. A man with a deformed knee-joint becomes indigent.

The poor have shanks like the jackal's. Equal shanks without hair are indicative of kingship.

Strong ankles and warm feet mark out the king. Well-formed, reddish feet are auspicious. Rough, uneven feet, shaped like winnowing fans, are inauspicious.

Withered-looking toes are the marks of sorrow and poverty. Soles not showing while standing are auspicious. The man with his soles well set and firm, the middle slightly hollow and shaped like the lotus, will be wealthy and be loved by women. Flat, pale, vein-ridden soles are inauspicious. Pink soles that do not perspire are auspicious.

Very soft soles indicate an unsteady temperament. A redundant toe on the left foot denotes danger to life.

WOMEN IN PARTICULAR

A woman, beautiful in the formation and development of her body, having the majestic gait of an elephant, with full, rounded hips, restless eyes suggestive of passion, and intoxicated with the wine of youth and love, should be deemed specially fortunate.

A woman possessing a luxuriant growth of black hair, a beautiful complexion, elevated breasts closely pressing against each other and a smooth body without hair is fortunate.

A woman whose cheeks are of the hue of the Madhuka flower, whose arched eyebrows do not run together, should be considered a desirable bride even if she possesses other undesirable features.

The maiden with a face like the full moon, who is effulgent like the rising sun, and who has expansive eyes and lips like the Vimba fruit, is fortunate.

The auspicious signs in a woman are cool and high breasts, copper-coloured nails, delicate feet, marks of the fish, goad, lotus, discus or ploughshare on the

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soles, palms that do not perspire, large hips without hair, thighs tapering like the trunk of the elephant, buttocks shaped like fig-leaves, deep navel, and a chest and breasts without hair. He who obtains her for a wife becomes a king.

Black, glossy hair, wavy and ending in curls, is auspicious in women; so is a slightly elevated forehead, about three fingers in breadth, and shaped like the crescent. Too high a brow in a woman indicates loss of her husband's brother. A hairy brow indicates misery. Too broad or too narrow a forehead in a woman is inauspicious.

Reddish hair, short, straight hair, rough hair difficult to comb, kinked hair, all indicate misfortune and servility.

Ears without veins but with large lobes are auspicious in women. If the left ear of a woman is of a different colour or shape from the right, she will become deaf.

Prominent veins on the ears of a woman are inauspicious.

Eyes tinted pink, with black apples, lids shaped like the conch, lashes long and black, are auspicious in women. Round, rolling eyes indicate a woman of bad character, and protruding eyes, short life. Eyes shaped like those of the crocodile, buffalo or goat, are inauspicious while those like the fawn's are most auspicious. Yellow eyes are indicative of indifference. Deep-set eyes are wicked. Loss of right eye will lead to widowhood, and that of the left eye to loose morals.

Squint, tawny coloured eyes, dark blue, restless eyes, looks always suggestive of a smile, and depressed cheeks are signs of a woman of loose morals. Eyes like the blue lotus, well set near the nose, are auspicious.

Eyebrows graciously bent like a bow, with smooth curly hair are auspicious.

Eyelids with scanty lashes, rough and copper-coloured, indicate excessive passion and inconstancy.

Thick, hairy eyebrows of dull colour indicate servitude, and drooping hair on the eyebrow denotes unreliability.

A straight, well-shaped, even nose is auspicious in women; any other kind of nose is inauspicious.

Lips with light lines, suggestive of lotus petals, are auspicious. Very thin lips, hanging lips and lips with deep lines forebode misfortune. Black lips indicate widowhood and a tendency to sin. A very high, upper lip shows harshness, haughtiness or quarrelsome nature.

Smooth, lineless cheeks, in colour like gold plates, with dimples while smiling, are auspicious. Lean, masculine, hairy or bent cheeks forebode misery.

Small, even, white teeth are auspicious. Uneven teeth with gaps in between indicate a love of excesses. Double teeth indicate widowhood. More teeth on the lower than the upper jaw indicate misfortune.

A tongue tinged pink is a good sign in women. A thick, ugly tongue is inauspicious. A yellowish tongue indicates a tendency to asceticism and an aversion to the pleasures of the world. A very pale tongue indicates widowhood and a rough tongue, brooding tendencies. A black tongue is evil and a woman possessing it will have no sons. A wicked woman has black spots on her tongue. A bent or crooked tongue denotes a love of babbling and quarrels.

The woman who smiles with slightly opened lips, showing her fine teeth but not the gums, with ripples on her cheeks, is fortunate.

Immodest, loud laughter or smile showing the gums is undesirable in women.

A round, smooth neck, about four inches long, is auspicious. A conch-shaped neck or one like an alabaster pillar is desirable in women.

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A woman with a thick, short neck will be abandoned by her husband. A woman with a red neck will be a slave. Prominent veins on the neck indicate widowhood, and an elongated neck poverty.

A desirable woman has a voice like the notes of the koil.

Slightly depressed, round arm-pits are auspicious in women. A flat wiry-looking arm-pit indicates widowhood.

Round, even shoulders indicate birth of sons. Thick, muscular shoulders indicate a love of excesses and hair on the shoulders, widowhood.

Firm, round breasts, both of equal shape and size, indicate happiness and prosperity. Elongated breasts with thick nipples are inauspicious. A woman with her right breast more elevated than the left will have more sons than daughters, and *vice versa*. Prominent hair on the nipples indicates loose morals.

Hair on the chest of a woman indicates widowhood or divorce. A too broad or flat chest indicates loose morals. A clear, hairless, elevated chest is auspicious. A lean and depressed chest is inauspicious.

A straight back, not showing the backbone or ribs, is auspicious. A hairy back indicates widowhood, and a bent or depressed backbone misery; a back with prominent veins is inauspicious.

Three sharp lines and fine hair on the belly are auspicious. The woman who has a small-sized stomach, smooth and clean, will enjoy the good things of the world and be the mother of sons. A frog-shaped belly is auspicious and indicates the birth of great sons and daughters. An elongated belly is a good sign in a woman and denotes strength of character and dignity. An elevated, protruding stomach indicates sterility and a thick, muscular stomach, still-birth and abortion. A depression in the stomach is inauspicious. A belly shaped like a pot or drum is a bad sign in a woman and is indicative of sterility, abortion and other misfortunes.

A well-depressed navel is auspicious; so is one that is fleshy with three wrinkles in it.

Hairy, lean hands indicate widowhood. Prominent veins on the back of the palm denote poverty and want. Back of the palm without the veins showing, slightly elevated at the base, is auspicious. A smooth palm, suggestive of the lotus, with clear lines is auspicious.

The woman who has the marks of the goad, circle and discus on her palm will obtain a king for her husband and give birth to sons. Linear marks on the palm show longevity.

A thumb shaped like a lotus bud indicates happiness in married life.

The woman who has the mark of a wall or gate on her palm will become a queen even if born under poor circumstances.

Many lines on the palm indicate misery and very few, poverty. The lady with clear, crimson coloured lines on her palm is fortunate; dark blue lines indicate infidelity.

White, flat nails are inauspicious. A woman with brown nails marked with white spots will be excessively passionate. Yellow nails are indicative of sorrow and misery.

The woman whose thumb and ring-fingers are excessively big, will lose her husband and lead an immoral life.

A raised, elongated pubic region denotes fame; the noble-minded woman has fleshy pubic region. Pubes shaped like an elephant's neck or tortoise-shell denote passion; a Yoni shaped like the leaf of the peepal indicates happiness.

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Hairy, hoof-shaped Yoni is inauspicious. A circle-shaped Yoni indicates loose morals, and a thin, rough one, widowhood.

A large-sized hip with a zone about twenty fingers in circumference is auspicious.

A capacious buttock shaped like the fig-leaf is auspicious. A woman with rounded hips, clear of hair and veins, will be fortunate. A woman with high hips brings about the death of her husband.

Thighs in shape like the trunk of the elephant, and cool to touch, are the most auspicious in women.

If a woman has two hairs on each pore of her shin, it indicates prosperity; one each proclaims the queen, but three, widowhood.

Pale, rough feet, in shape like winnowing fans, indicate poverty, and crooked toes, misery. The woman with prominent veins on her feet will be a wanderer. A hairy foot indicates servitude. Withered-looking toes are marks of sorrow and poverty.

Reddish, smooth, warm soles having the mystic marks of the lotus, the conch, the banner, the chariot, the wheel, fish, an aerial car, the horse, the elephant, the tree, sacrificial stake, wheat, banner, chowri, garland, hill, well, altar, umbrella, Swastika or goad, are indicative of the queen.

Roundish, copper-coloured, smooth toe-nails are indicative of the attainment of one's desires. Uneven toes, placed one over the other indicate a plurality of husbands.

A woman who walks with all her toes touching the ground and without raking up dust is fortunate. While walking, if the little toe does not touch the ground, the woman will be widowed twice; if the middle toe does not touch the ground, she will cause the death of three husbands. If the little or middle toe is too small in proportion to the other toes, it indicates widowhood.

A woman whose body and breasts are covered with hair, is destined to become a widow at a very young age.

Oily eyes indicate good luck; oily teeth, gain of the good things of life; oily feet, travel; and an oily skin, soft couches to sleep on.

Loins, forehead and chest shaped like the tortoise are auspicious; so are fleshy wrists and hips.

Elevated calves, sinewy hips, and depressed or small buttocks are signs of misery.

A short neck is the sign of poverty in a woman, and a long one, of the extinction of her family.

Hairy lips in a woman are most inauspicious for husbands.

A sinewy, uneven, dry, body indicates poverty.

A woman with the external stump of her umbilical involuted from the right to the left, whose delta resembles an Asvatha leaf in shape or whose ankles have small dips in the middle, is fortunate.

A woman with an elongated abdomen covered with bristling, brown hair, should be regarded as the repository of all evil.

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127. A FEMALE FORTUNE TELLER
(*Photo*: N. Ramakrishna)

128. A MALE FORTUNE TELLER
(*Photo*: N. Ramakrishna)

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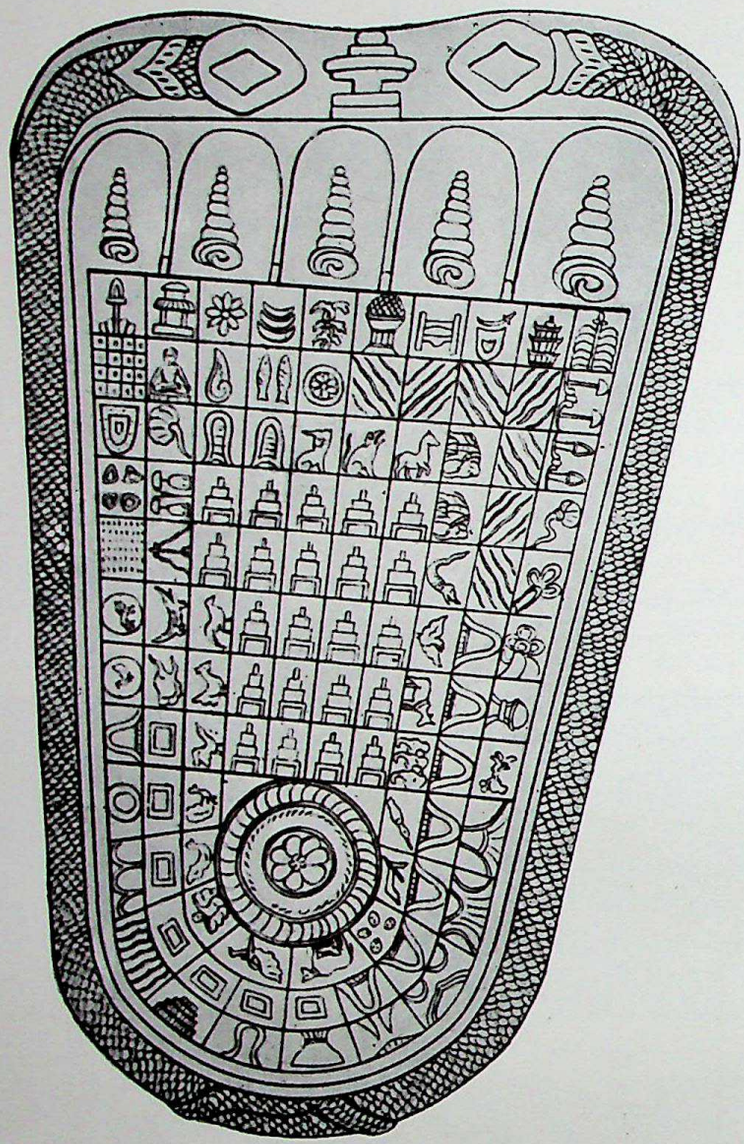

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129. MYSTIC MARKS ON THE SOLE OF THE BUDDHA'S FOOT
(*From* Coleman's *The Mythology of the Hindus*)

130. MARKS AND SIGNS ON THE SOLES OF KRISHNA'S FEET
(*From* Sen's *Hasta Samudrika Sastra*)

131. MARKS ON THE SOLES OF RADHA'S FEET
(*From* Sen's *Hasta Samudrika Sastra*)

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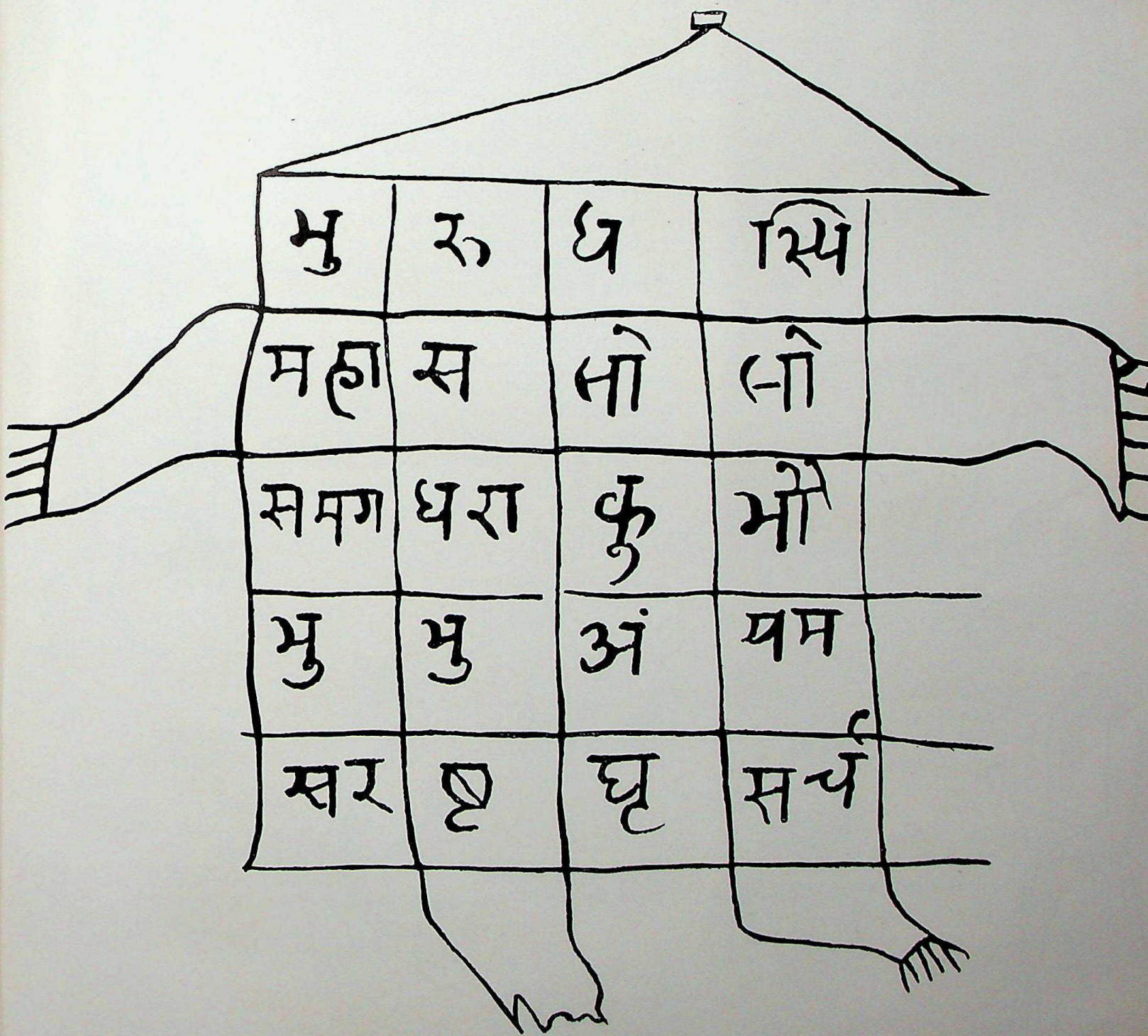
132. A YANTRA TO WARD OFF THE EVIL EYE



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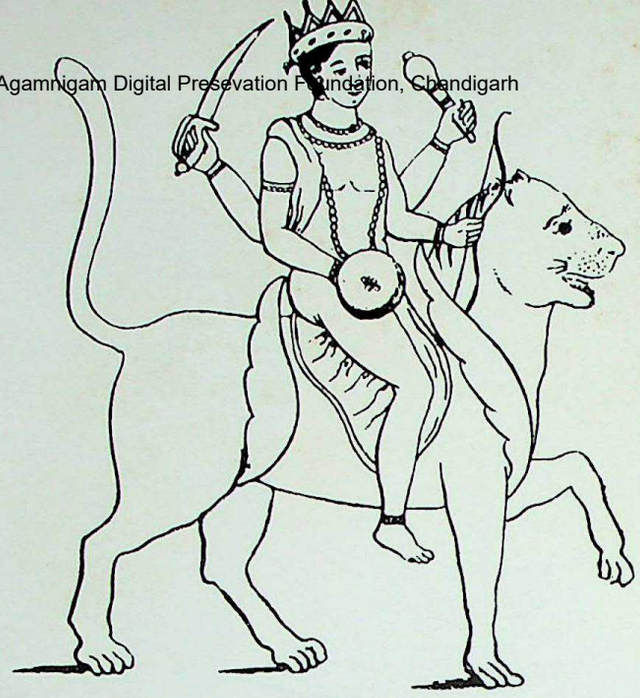

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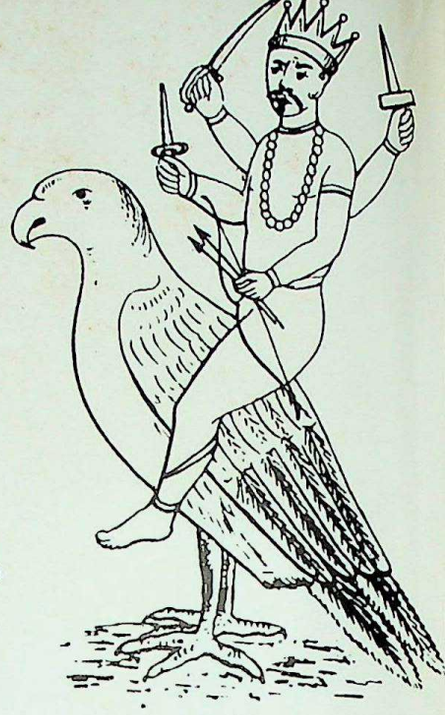

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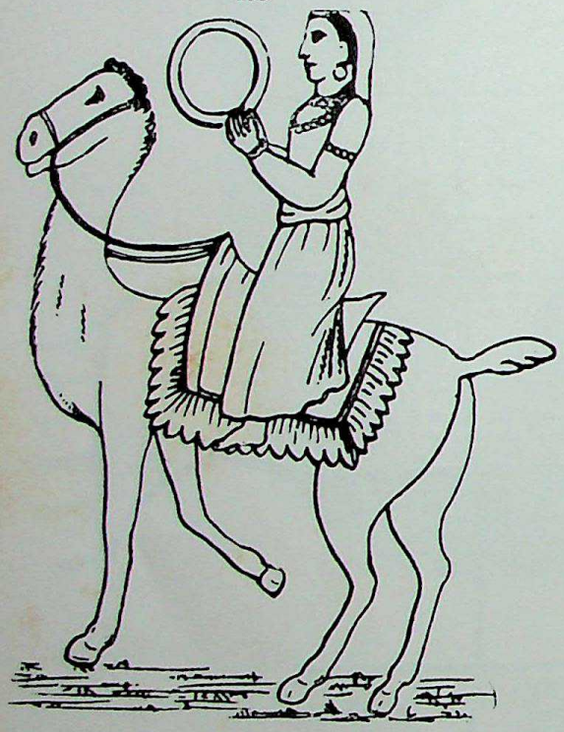

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133. BRAHASPATI PLANET
134. BUDHA PLANET
135. SANI PLANET
136. SUKRA PLANET
137. MANGALA PLANET
138. RAHU PLANET
139. RASI CHAKRA

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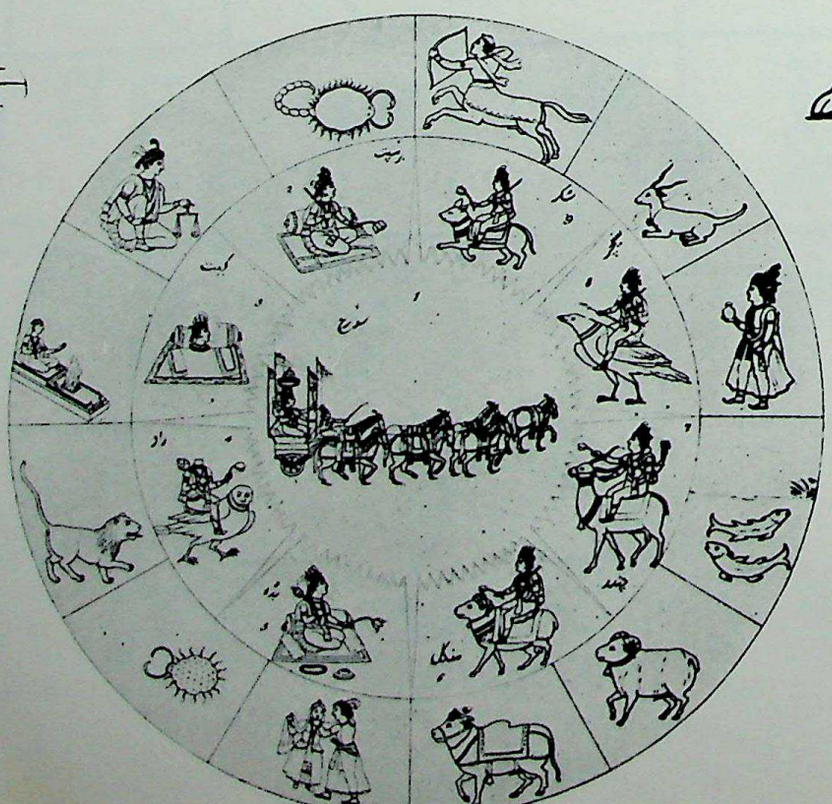

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17. The Evil Eye and the Black Tongue

NO BELIEF is perhaps so universal among mankind as that of the evil eye. With ancients it was almost a religious belief. In Rome there were special laws against causing injury by *faccinatio*, as the evil eye was known in the empire. In the Old Testament (Proverbs XXVIII, 22) we read that "he that hasteth to be rich has an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." In the Parable of the Labourers, Jesus asks: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" Plutarch maintains that "the objects that are fastened up as a means of keeping off witchcraft derive their efficacy from the fact that they act through the strangeness and ridiculousness of their forms which fix the mischief working evil eye upon themselves."

The Arabs believe that camels and horses are particularly affected by the evil eye. Neapolitans call the possessor of the evil eye a *jettator* and at his approach streets will clear. According to a Polish tale, a Slav afflicted with the evil eye had to blind himself in order to save his own children from its baleful effects. "The ignorant mothers of many of modern Egyptians," we are told, "when they find their children develop any sickness causing hollow eyes, pale faces, and swollen bellies, believe this to be the effect of the evil eye of some envious person who has bewitched them." Further, "Nothing can exceed the superstitions of the Turks respecting the evil eye of an enemy or infidel. Passages from the Koran are painted outside of the houses, and a part of the superfluous caparison of their horses is designed to attract attention and divert a similar influence."* From Hebrides comes a story of the evil eye which led to a court case as late as 1883. "A case, by no means exceptional, was tried before the Sheriff at Storneway for defamation, a man having formally accused a whole family of having by witchcraft stolen the milk from his cow. He stuck to his belief and was fined five shillings and costs. Still more frequent is the accusation of having wilfully cast the evil eye on a neighbour's goods; and our northern Sheriffs have to decide many a case for slander and defamation, all turning on some such vague accusation of witchcraft. For the dread of the evil eye is just as great here as in the Far East, and any one reputed to possess it is shunned as the living plague. Quite recently I knew an instance of the people on the beautiful west coast of Rosshire refusing to let a woman settle among them; and they even came to the proprietor to request that he would not give her assistance because they declared that she had wicked eyes. To us the young woman and her eyes seemed rather comely and kindly."†

Bacon, who is considered the man who ushered in the scientific era in Europe, has a scientific explanation for the evil eye. Envy or covetousness, it would appear, is capable of generating psychic forces that may have an adverse effect on the things

* Dallaway, *Account of Constantinople.*

† Gordon Cunning, *In the Hebrides.*

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desired or coveted. "Envy which is called the evil eye," says Bacon, "seems to emit some malignant and poisonous spirits that take hold of the spirits of another and is said to be likewise of greatest force when the cast of the eye is oblique." Hence, too the popular belief that the evil eye is generally met with among the poor and the needy, though occasionally a well-to-do man coveting his neighbour's goods may get afflicted with the evil eye.

In India the belief in the evil eye is part of popular Hinduism, and various causes are ascribed to it, in addition to covetousness and envy. According to *Sarvartha Chintamani*, a work on astrology, a man or woman born under the influence of Mula (the 19th lunar asterism) or in the first quarter of Aslesha (16th lunar asterism) or in the last quarter of Vaisakha (the 9th lunar asterism) is supposed to possess Papa Drishti or the evil eye. "Whatever things he or she looks upon get blighted." Sometimes the behaviour of the mother during pregnancy is also supposed to influence the child's character and make it evil-eyed. "A woman in her pregnancy conceives peculiar longings from the day of conception till about the fifth month. Under these longings she desires to eat different kinds of fruit and sweetmeat, to smell or wear various flowers, to put on clothes of different sorts and colours, to feed Brahmins or do other like things. If for want of means or other reasons, any of these longings are not satisfied, she gives birth to a thin and weak child. Such a child, when it reaches youth, is sure to have the evil eye."

The man with the evil eye is not necessarily a wicked person, and the effect of the evil eye is, more often than not, unintentional. Nor can the evil-eyed person be found out by any external marks or peculiarity of features. Usually, in a village or in the particular locality in which the evil-eyed one lives, a thing or two gets blighted by his eye, and people then begin to take notice of him and avoid him. "All witches and wizards are believed to be evil-eyed; so are all beggars and men and women of the lowest castes such as the Mahars, Mangs, Phudgis, etc."

As a rule, desirable things are affected most by the evil eye, and as such, good-looking children, young girls, healthy domestic animals, trees in bloom, harvests, etc., are all protected by charms, scarecrows, lockets, etc., from the gaze of evil-eyed persons. "Men, women and children when affected by the evil eye, suffer severe pain in the stomach, lose all appetite, cannot eat and if they eat, vomit. All lingering sicknesses, pallor, want of appetite, dyspepsia and many other like distempers are believed to be caused by the evil eye. Cows and she-buffaloes do not give milk when blighted, or, when milked, yield blood. Bullocks and horses refuse food and become restive. Trees do not bear fruit, drop off leaves and flowers, and wither. Stones break; pearls lose their lustre and jewels either break or lose their brilliance."

PREVENTION AND CURE OF THE BLIGHT OF THE EVIL EYE

Every Hindu mother takes particular care to protect her child from the effects of the evil eye. As mothers have an exaggerated opinion about the looks and desirabilities of their babies, the mother of a new-born baby is inclined to imagine that all other women are envious of her; further, there may be malicious spirits who might cast evil eyes on the precious baby.

In the *Bhagvata* we read of the expedients resorted to by Yasoda for the cure of the effects of the evil eye cast by the demoness Putana on child Krishna. Yasoda "with the assistance of Rohini and other women of Gokula waved round the face

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of the child the tail of the sacred cow, sprinkled him with cow's urine and then with the earth taken from the foot-prints of the animal; and lastly marked his forehead, eyes, ears, etc., with cow-dung ashes."

Waving salt water three times round the head of the afflicted infant cures, it is said, the ill effects of the evil eye. Lamp black is another charm used for the cure of the harm caused by the evil eye, and mothers at times daub the faces of infants with it. But the best remedy for the prevention and cure of the evil eye is said to be the berry called Dhrishtamani or "the evil-eye bead." These beads are strung together and worn by children as a necklace, and it is believed that if a child, wearing the charm, falls under the malignant influence of the evil eye, the beads either break or change their colour. "These Dhrishtamanis may be compared with the nuts called Molluka beans used as amulets against fascination in some of the western islands of Scotland."

Tiger's claws and bear's hair are also considered effective in the prevention of the evil eye in many parts of India, and these are set in gold or silver and worn as ornaments. In Kerala, it is usual for a hair from an elephant's tail to be set in silver or gold and worn on the wrist for preventing malignant influences. "In the *Hari Vijaya*, a popular Mahrathi poem, Krishna is described as wearing tiger's claws round his neck during his infancy."

For cure of children afflicted with the evil eye, the following ceremony is performed by the mother or the senior lady in the house:

A bronze cup, filled with milk, and a saucer with cooked food are waved over the head of the afflicted child seven times from left to right; the contents are then emptied at a junction of four roads.

The New Year's Eve is considered particularly ominous, as all malignant influences are dominant at the time. The day is called Kali Choudha (black fourteenth, being the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month of Asvin of the Indian calendar) and women take special care to apply, before sunrise, the black pigment known as "mesh" to their eye-lids to ward off the bad effects of the evil eye.

Among other remedies intended to prevent or cure the blight of the evil eye the following are a few:

The skin of a hyena's head, coconut kernel, alyssym (madwort), the stone of catochites, necklaces of jacinth or sapphire hung up in a prominent place in the house. Garlands of garlic, cloves or cowries (especially the yellow variety known as Bhavani cowries) are often tied round a child's neck; the patient is at times given a drink in which is dissolved the ashes of a rope by which a man has hanged himself; hanging up the key of the house over a child's cradle is also believed to protect the occupant from the evil eye. Those who fear the evil eye, on going on a journey take care to spit on the right shoe before putting it on. Waving three morsels of food over the head of an afflicted child and then giving the morsels to a dog can also cure the child.

As covetousness or envy is believed to be at the root of the evil eye, a logical method of prevention is to make an attractive object repulsive by artificial means so that the evil-eyed person may develop no interest in it, consciously or unconsciously. Hence mothers often take the trouble of painting the faces of their children with soot; similarly an attractive girl may be given a repulsive name like Kali so that the name may counteract the effect produced by the good looks of the girl. The idea is at times carried further and a boy may be dressed as a girl and *vice versa* in order to completely confuse the evil-eyed individual.

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Grown up people are less susceptible to the malignant influence of the evil eye than children, but at times they too are affected by the blight and in such cases the remedies resorted to are some of the following:

1. Take a handful of dust from the junction of three roads and mix it with salt, chillies and coriander. Wave the mixture thrice round the face of the patient and then put it in a fire in a plate or piece of broken pottery or tile. If the smoke smells of chillies, the man is suffering from an ailment which has nothing to do with the evil eye; if it does not, the evil eye has caused his malady, and the treatment should be repeated till the burnt mixture smells of chillies.

2. If the patient develops a particular aversion to something edible, that stuff should be taken and divided into three or five parts. Take each of these parts to the mouth of the person and then put it on fire. Repeat the process till the person feels like eating it.

3. When it is believed that the patient has contracted his illness due to an evil-eyed person seeing the victim eating a particular viand, invite the evil-eyed person and give him the viands he had cast evil eyes on. If the greedy guest feels satisfied with the fare, the sick man will take a turn for the better and be cured, given time.

4. Take sixty-four leaves of the palmyra palm and wave the bundle thrice over the face of the patient; this should be done by an exorcist or an expert who knows how to treat malignant influences. The leaves must now be separated and tied into knots, the person treating the patient repeating the names of the eight Matrikas while tying the knots. All the sixty-four leaves should then be put in a vessel together with a pebble picked from the junction of four roads and a morsel of food, and the vessel should then be filled with water. The spittle of the sick man, a lock of his hair and a finger-nail should now be put in the vessel. Close the mouth of the vessel with castor leaves and tie a piece of cloth over it. Wave the charmed vessel three times round the face of the patient and then boil it in slow fire fed occasionally with clarified butter. On boiling, take the vessel from the fire and place it under the cot of the patient. A broom and a shoe, struck three times on the ground should be placed near the vessel. The patient should gradually recover from the time the vessel is placed under the cot; if he does not, the cause of his illness is not the evil eye, and a physician may be consulted.

In addition to these minor remedies, professional Mantrins have various formulae for the prevention and cure of the evil eye, and numerous charms, lockets and amulets inspired with Yantras and Mantras are in wide use in India. The making of lockets and charms by Mantrins has been already dealt with in Chapter 4, and need not be repeated here.

Not only humans but animals, trees and crops, as already stated, are believed to be affected by the evil eye. Usually villagers tie round the horns or necks of animals charmed threads, beads or shells. "When their cows cease to give milk or pass blood instead, the Phudgis and Kolis of Thana district prepare a charm from the plant called Bhutawali, and tie it round their necks." At times a tree may be seen with old shoes or brooms hanging from its branches; these are devices calculated to ward off the evil eye.

The most common form of preventive against the evil eye, intended to protect crops, buildings under construction (these are considered particularly vulnerable), etc., is by erecting scarecrows. These devices are believed to catch the evil eye before it blasts the crops or buildings they protect. It is the first look that is considered

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deadly, and once its effect is neutralized, subsequent looks may be harmless.

Scarecrows are designed to be as repulsive as possible, so that a person looking at them may not be tempted to look again in that direction. Obscene scarecrows are considered more effective than the merely ugly. Obscenity has an additional advantage as it serves as a counterblast as well. According to ancient beliefs, the genitals have magical properties and there are anthropologists who maintain that the wearing of clothes originated in a desire to protect people from their evil, magical influences. For the same reason, perhaps, figures of Priapus were considered, in ancient Mediterranean world, as particularly effective in warding off the evil eye, and in Indian villages today can be seen scarecrows with prominent phalli.

Black mud pots, with white spots, stuck on long poles can also be seen in fields in India, put up to ward off the evil eye.

THE BLACK TONGUE

Less widespread than the belief in the evil eye, but equally strong in certain parts of India, is the dread of the black tongue. A person afflicted with this malady prophesies evil without knowing it. Whatever he praises perishes. The evil tongue is called the black tongue because it is said to be tinged black at the base. When the evil eye is combined with the black tongue, the effect is irresistible.

Because of the fear of the black tongue, it is bad form in India for a stranger to praise anything. In certain parts of India, if an unknown person visits a household and, seeing a child or anything lovely, remarks, "what a sweet baby!" or something to this effect, the host will turn sharp and retort: "Look at your feet! It is soiled with mud!" in order to counteract the possible effect of the black tongue. Mango trees in bloom are known to have perished because of a black-tongued person having praised them, and dogs and cats to have died of fits.

Like the evil-eyed person, the black-tongued person is discovered by the ill effects of his praise, and in the locality he lives he too like the evil-eyed person is shunned like the plague.

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18. Astrological Beliefs of the Hindus

THE QUESTION whether astrology is a regular science or not has seldom troubled the Hindu thinker, and practically every orthodox Hindu believes in stellar influences just as he does in the spirit world. In Hindu India, the dividing line between astronomy and astrology has always been vague, and the same Sanskrit word "Jyotish" is applied to both. Nor has modernism and contact with the West lessened Hindu belief in astrology; if anything, the West seems to have been considerably influenced by the East in this matter, and "WHAT THE STARS FORETELL" has now become, more or less, a regular feature of popular journals in the West.

A Hindu who can afford it has a horoscope of every member of his family made at birth. In towns and cities, good astrologers are available for the purpose, but in rural areas horoscopes are cast by the village astrologer, not a very learned individual as a rule; but since he notes down the exact time of birth, the Nakshatra or asterism and other basic details, services of experts can be requisitioned, if and when need arises. For any competent astrologer can work out the planetary positions and their balance of influence on an individual born at a given time and place. The possibility of error in predictions is admitted, but it is, as a rule, ascribed to the human limitations of the astrologer and not to any flaw in the science itself.

The horoscope provides an index to the future of a Hindu, male or female, and the orthodox would not undertake any major enterprise except at a time indicated as auspicious in the horoscope. For though each hour has its own independent balance of astral influence, which may or may not be favourable, its effect on a particular individual is largely conditioned by indications in his horoscope, as the planetary position at the time of nativity is considered the most decisive factor in the destiny of a person. Again, marriages among the Hindus are usually arranged by parents, and compatibility of horoscopes is ever important for the acceptance, by either party, of a marriage proposal. If the horoscopes are incompatible, the proposal is immediately dropped, however desirable it may look otherwise. Compatibility of horoscopes is dependent on various factors, but certain evil influences in one horoscope may be cancelled out or balanced by contrary indications in the other. A girl with a "widow-hood indication," for instance, will not be eligible for marriage with a man of "short life indication," but a "longevity indication" in the man's horoscope may very well cancel the "widow-hood indication," and leave the balance of fortune in the couple's favour. As a rule, only an experienced astrologer is competent to decide the compatibility and incompatibility of horoscopes.

It is outside the scope of this book to give a detailed account of Indian astro-

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logy, but for the general information of the lay reader, certain salient features of the system are given below.*

THE ZODIAC

Ever since Alexander's conquest of north-western India, there had been close cultural contacts between East and West, and in the Greek kingdom of Bactria, Indian, Persian and Greek scholars possibly met often to exchange ideas and discuss scientific problems. With the decline of the Greeks and the rise of Islam in the Middle East, Indo-Greek contacts ceased, but with the British occupation of India ancient Indo-European cultural contacts revived through the medium of English education, and modern Indian astrologers have modified the ancient system of Indian astrology in the light of advanced astronomical evidence.

The willingness to learn as well as to teach had been a desirable trait among ancient Indian star-gazers too. In Varaha Mihira's treatise on Indian astronomy we find references to Western systems, and *Romaka Siddhanta* (the Roman System) is discussed in detail. Varaha Mihira lived in the sixth century A.D., and it is clear that a good deal of earlier study and research had gone into the development of astronomy as seen from Varaha Mihira's works. The Indian and Greek systems have much in common; it will not be relevant to our subject to enter into a discussion as to who borrowed from whom or whether both Indian and Western systems had a common origin in ancient Chaldea, a renowed centre of study for astral sciences, but suffice to say that the names of the zodiac in both Indian and Greek systems almost read like translations.

The twelve signs of the Indian zodiac and their Western equivalents are:

1. Mesha (Aries, the ram)
2. Vrishabha (Taurus, the bull)
3. Mithuna (Gemini, the twins)
4. Kirk or Kataka (Cancer, the crab)
5. Simha (Leo, the lion)
6. Kanya (Virgo, the virgin)
7. Tula (Libra, the scales)
8. Vrischika (Scorpio, the scorpion)
9. Dhanu (Sagittarius, the archer)
10. Makara (Capricorn, the goat)
11. Kumbha (Aquarius, the water-carrier)
12. Meena (Pisces, the fish)

In certain Indian calendars (for instance, in the Kollam Era of the South which follows solar reckoning) the months of the year are named after the signs.

Each sign, thus, covers a month of the solar year. Though the destiny of a person is indicated by the planetary position related to the sign under which he or she is born, each sign has certain general indications; but in Indian astrology more important than the natal sign is the Janma Nakshatra or natal asterism, which will be described later.

* For this outline of Indian astrology, I am mainly indebted to the following works: *Directional Astrology of the Hindus* by V. G. Rele, *Everyday Astrology* by V. A. K. Ayer and *What the Stars Foretell* by "Jupiter".

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THE PLANETS

The planets in Indian astrology are nine: Ravi, Sun; Chandra, Moon; Mangala, Mars; Budha, Mercury; Guru or Brahaspati, Jupiter; Sukra, Venus; Sani, Saturn; Rahu, Dragon's Head (the ascending node); and Ketu, Dragon's Tail (the descending node). Rahu and Ketu are conceptions rather than realities, and Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, having been discovered later, find no place in ancient Indian astrology; further, according to orthodox Indian astrology, all planets, including Moon and Venus, are male, though modern Indian astrologers, following the Western system, are inclined to treat Moon and Venus as female, and predict the influences of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.

As every one acquainted with astrology knows but too well, the influences of planets are variable according to their positions in relation to one another and the "houses" they occupy in their movements. They are particularly strong in their "exaltation" and weak in "debilitation" points. Each planet has a house or two in the zodiac and is capable of exerting the maximum influence while occupying his own house. Further, planets have their natural friends and enemies among themselves; they are at home in their own or friendly houses, ineffective in the houses of neutrals and positively weak and debilitated while passing through the houses of enemies. Again, "malefics" may turn mild "benefics" and benefics might degenerate into indifference or malevolence while occupying certain houses or conjunctions. All told, planets have much in common with men in this respect, and are personified into beings with certain qualities or characteristics and some measure of free will; hence though their course through the heavens is more or less fixed by immutable laws, their astral behaviour is variable. All the same, planets have their natural attributes. But just as a habitually genial man, placed under adverse environments, might lose his cheerfulness and at times his temper too, or like an irascible man, after he has dined well, might find himself in an expansive mood, planets might behave contrary to their nature and are even capable of caprice. Hence the following characteristics of planets should be taken merely as indicative of their natural inclinations and not as absolute or unchangeable.

Ravi (Sun): He is an energetic, powerful person of bilious nature. He represents courage, will power, muscular strength and authority. He has domain over rulers. He has a preference for open places, hills and forests, metropolitan cities and famous places of worship.

Ravi is the lord of the east. Ravi-var (Sunday) is named after him. Substances favoured of the sun are fuel, hides and skin, wool, weapons, silk, gold, fire, poison, drugs and wheat. He rules over kings, doctors, administrators, herdsmen and male parents.

Parts of the human anatomy over which Sun has control are: the head, heart and blood-vessels, bones, eyes, stomach, throat and spleen. Blood-pressure, cerebral disorders, eye troubles, diseases of ear, nose and throat, tuberculosis and dysentery are ascribed to an offended sun.

The Sun is a malefic. He owns Simha (Leo) as his house in the zodiac. Moon, Mars and Jupiter are his natural friends, and Saturn and Venus, his enemies. He is neutral towards Mercury.

Chandra (Moon): In Indian astrology, Moon, as already stated, is male. He rules over emotions and intelligence. Lakes and the sea are places favoured of him.

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His special substances are textiles, chemicals, wines, milk, liquids generally, sugar cane, pearls, silver, rice and barley. Moon rules famous personalities, young women, female parents and farmers.

He is of a mild disposition; his favourite colour is white.

Moon rules over the nerves, brain, fat, genitals, bladder, breasts, ovaries and uteri. Diseases caused by him are jaundice, nasal afflictions, ailments connected with pregnancy and childbirth, asthma, hysteria, epidermal afflictions and venereal diseases.

The Moon is a benefic. His house is Cancer. Sun and Mercury are his friends and the rest of the planets are neutral to him ; he has no enemies.

Soma-var (Monday) is named after Moon. He presides over the north-west.

Mangala (Mars): He is the war lord among the planets, and is red and fiery. He rules over persistence, logic and action. Murder, armed dacoity, political uprisings, wars, revolutions, intrigues, conspiracies and illicit love are caused by him. His substances are copper, tin, tobacco, hemp and minerals generally. His haunts are mines, armouries, battle-fields, waste lands and kitchens.

Mars is the lord of the south, and Mangal-var (Tuesday) is named after him.

Mars controls marrow, bile, veins, and adolescence. Afflictions caused by him are bleeding, abortions, menstrual disorders, accidental wounds, burns, high fever and rheumatic complaints.

He rules over brothers, enemies, scandal-mongers, thieves and policemen.

Mars is a malefic. Aries and Scorpio are his houses. He is friendly towards Sun, Moon and Jupiter, inimical towards Venus and Saturn, and neutral towards Mercury.

Budha (Mercury): Green in colour, Budha is an elegantly built, royal personage. Eloquence, research, education, authorship and commerce are his special departments. He rules over water, edible oils, lead, emerald and green peas. He loves parks, schools, libraries and palaces. He is fond of horses. He controls businessmen, uncles and nephews.

Parts of the human system under his charge are brain, thorax, tongue, and neck, and diseases caused by him are amnesia, partial or total insanity, neurosis, headaches and sores.

He rules the north and Budh-var (Wednesday) is named after him.

Budha is a benefic. He owns two houses, Gemini and Virgo. He is friendly towards Sun and Venus, inimical to Moon, and neutral towards Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

Brahaspati or Guru (Jupiter): He is the preceptor of celestials, and the embodiment of learning and wisdom. Yellow is his colour. His favourite substances are silver, ether, topaz and cardamom. His haunts are the assemblies of the learned, treasure houses, mints and places where the scriptures are read and expounded.

He controls fats in the body, the stomach, and the digestive system generally. Diseases caused by Guru are dropsy, liver complaints, carbuncles, indigestion and leucorrhoea.

Guru rules over scholars, grandfathers and grandchildren. He is the lord of the north-east and Guru/Brahaspati-var (Thursday) is named after him.

Guru is a benefic, and owns the houses of Sagittarius and Pisces. Friendly towards Sun, Moon and Mars, he is inimical towards Mercury and Venus, and neutral towards Saturn.

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Sukra (Venus): In Indian astrology Sukra is conceived as male, as already stated. He has domain over vehicles, beauty aids, marital relations, sexual pleasures generally, travel and fine arts. Places favoured of him are the stage, dance halls, and regions of natural beauty.

Sukra is a benefic among benefics. Good luck, among the Hindus, is often mentioned as Sukra Dasa or period of Sukra.

He has control over genitals, thighs and hair; diseases caused by him are debility, impotence, loss of sight and smell.

Sukra rules over the south-east and Sukra-var (Friday) is called after him.

Sukra owns Taurus and Libra. He is friendly towards Mercury and Saturn, inimical towards Sun and Moon, and neutral towards Mars and Jupiter.

He rules over sexual partners.

Sani (Saturn): He is an irascible person riding on a vulture. He is black. Saturn has domain over air and wilderness. Iron, rye, sapphire, and gram are his substances. Prisons, cremation grounds, marshes and dirty places are his favourite haunts. He rules over the excretory system, wrists, teeth and feet. Toothache, colic, intestinal ulcers, epilepsy, joint pains and asthma are caused by him. He rules over servants and old hags.

Sani is the lord of the west. Sani-var (Saturday) is called after him.

Sani is a malefic among malefics, and Sani Dasa (period of Sani) is dreaded like the plague by the Hindus. Sani has Sukra and Mercury for friends, Sun, Moon and Mars for enemies; he is neutral towards Jupiter. His houses are Aquarius and Capricorn.

Rahu and Ketu (Dragon's Head and Tail, the Ascending and Descending Nodes, respectively): These are the live head and truncated body of a demon.* Of demoniac origin they are essentially evil. Of black complexion, they control blood and skin. Small-pox, cholera, leprosy, plague and other epidemics are caused by them. They rule over prostitutes, gamblers and atheists. Poison is their favourite substance.

Both are malefics. According to some authorities, Rahu and Ketu are homeless wanderers, but others maintain that Rahu owns Virgo, and Ketu, Pisces, one of the two houses owned by Mercury and Jupiter respectively.

Venus and Saturn are their friends, and Sun and Moon, enemies; they are neutral towards Mars and Jupiter. Rahu and Ketu rule the south-west.

From the foregoing, it will be noticed that friendship and enmity are not reciprocal among planets. Rahu, for instance, loves Venus and Saturn, but Venus has no love for him.

NAKSHATRA OR ASTERISM

In casting horoscopes and in predictions generally, more important than the signs of the zodiac, to the Indian astrologer, are the lunar mansions called Nak-

* In Hindu mythology, the demon Rahu is said to have stolen into the ranks of the gods while they were feasting on Amrita or nectar. He sneaked in between Sun and Moon, who were seated together, and these gods, recognizing the fraud, informed Vishnu who was presiding over the feast, about the intruder. Vishnu immediately cut off the demon's neck. The miscreant, however, had already quaffed the nectar which had been served and hence could not die. So his head remains in the heavens as Rahu and body as Ketu. He is particularly vindictive against Sun and Moon for having informed against him, and eclipses are said to be caused by his trying to swallow them. The detailed story of the origin of Rahu and Ketu will be found in the author's work, *Epics, Myths and Legends of India.*

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shatras (asterisms), and every educated Hindu knows the asterism under which he is born. His natal star is called his Janma Nakshatra and he never forgets it.

The twelve solar divisions of the zodiac and their names have already been noticed. In Indian astrology, the zodiac is also divided into twenty-seven Nakshatras of equal length; as a result, each sign of the zodiac will work out to two and a quarter Nakshatras. Each Nakshatra, for greater accuracy, is again subdivided into four Charanas or Padas, but we need not go into the details of these.

In Indian astrology, the natal star or Janma Nakshatra of a person means the asterism in which the moon is situated at the time of his or her birth. It is presumed that a good deal of a man is known once his Janma Nakshatra is known. The Janma Nakshatra is generally considered an index to the person's character and destiny. In certain regions in India, so much importance is attached to the Janma Nakshatra that it is prefixed to the names of well-known personalities. In Travancore, for instance, the members of the royal family are generally known by their Nakshatras, like Swati Thirunal, Kartika Thirunal, etc., Swati and Kartika being the asterism, and Thirunal, the Malayalam equivalent for "auspicious day."

Though correct predictions are possible only after a study of the planetary position relative to the Nakshatra under which a person is born, for general guidance the following broad indications are given in Indian astrology for persons born under different Nakshatras. (The first asterism, Asvini, is counted from the first point of the zodiac sign Mesha, about 20th May, and the rest are given in due order, each working out to approximately 13.5 days):

1. Asvini: Genial, clever, handsome and cultured. Strong aesthetic sense. Will inherit or acquire wealth.
2. Bharani: Honest, healthy, steadfast, wealthy. A great lover of life and its joys.
3. Kartika: Ambitious, unscrupulous, hypocritical. Sexually very virile. Gourmet. Will find royal favour and occupy high places.
4. Rohini: Generous, truthful and steady. A good conversationalist. Has exceptionally large eyes.
5. Margashirsha: A lover of physical comforts. Has a glib tongue. Will inherit wealth. Feels burdened with a sense of inferiority.
6. Ardra: Conceited, selfish, vain, ungrateful and irascible.
7. Punarvasu: Tactful and cunning. Indulges in vulgar language. Indifferent health. Loves liquid food.
8. Pushya: Dutiful, good-humoured and law-abiding. Scholarly habits. Charitable and popular.
9. Ashlesha: Of strong mind and cheerful disposition. Loves learning but inclined to use knowledge for personal ends. Tending to selfishness and deceit.
10. Magha: Sincere, zealous and God-fearing. A lover of travel and sightseeing. Particularly fond of flowers and fragrance. Will have great wealth and many servants.
11. Purva Phalguni: An able, far-sighted administrator. Uses polite but compelling language. Likely to prosper in business.
12. Uttara Phalguni: Intelligent, honest and well-meaning, but bilious and short-tempered. Bad appetite and digestive troubles.

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13. Hasta: Persevering and energetic. Will acquire wealth rather late in life. Inclined to meanness, cruelty and thieving.
14. Chitra: Of limited intelligence, but handsome and good-natured. Fond of finery, but inclined to be tight-fisted.
15. Swati: Generous, polite and virtuous. Loves fine arts. Dutiful to parents, loyal to the marital bed. Will make an able administrator.
16. Visakha: Cautious, jealous and inquisitive. Servile and miserly. Fear of God keeps him or her virtuous.
17. Anuradha: Has red eye-lashes and silky hair. Renowned and respected. Will acquire or inherit wealth and ride on elephants. A philogynist if male; loves men, if female. Fond of travel, and destined to die on foreign soil.
18. Jyestha: Irascible, ill-tempered, indigent liar. Will have few friends and many enemies. With all this, self-possessed.
19. Mula: Proud and determined. A great disciplinarian, harsh to subordinates and poor relations. Wealthy and powerful.
20. Purva Ashadha: Of stately build. Honest, faithful and particularly loyal and kind to mother. Strongly attracts the opposite sex. Will have wealth and many friends.
21. Uttara Ashadha: Well-built, with a prominent nose. Grateful, virtuous and discriminating. Helpful to the needy, beloved of parents and relatives. Highly popular.
22. Shravana: Aristocratic temperament. Cultured and noble. A lover of women, if male; fond of men's company, if woman. Will have longevity, wealth and loyal friends.
23. Dhanishta: Independent, self-willed, formidable. Highly respected or feared. A lover of beauty and fine arts.
24. Satha Bhishag: Of strong convictions and litigious nature. Favoured of kings and rulers.
25. Purva Bhadrapada: Immoral and melancholy. Easily swayed by the opposite sex. Hen-pecked if man, submissive if woman. Inherits wealth. Glib-tongued, unprincipled, avaricious.
26. Uttara Bhadrapada: Learned, invincible in polemics. Eloquent but insincere. Prolific in progeny.
27. Revati: Well-proportioned body, handsome appearance. Adventurous. Contemptuous of money-making occupations. Strongly attracts opposite sex. Reserved in speech.

Moon passing through certain Padas of Nakshatras at the time of birth, is considered particularly ominous. For example, "if the moon is in Asvini, first Pada, Ashlesha fourth, Magha first, Jyestha fourth and Mula first, at birth, the child scarcely survives. The life of the mother or father also is in danger. If, however, it survives the teen age by other powerful combinations, the child will live up to a ripe old age in a halo of glory.

"If the moon is in Jyestha, first Pada, it denotes harm to the elder brother, and Jyeshta second, to the younger brother."*

Before leaving the subject, mention may be made of a dreaded astral period in a Hindu's life, known as Sade Sathi (Saturn's seven and a half). Conscious-

* V. A. K. Ayer, *Everyday Astrology*.

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ness of this period of misfortune almost disables a weak-minded Hindu for effective action, as he feels completely helpless against the malignant influence of Saturn who is believed to be relentlessly pursuing him during this period of evil. "The transit of Saturn in the twelfth, first and second houses from the moon goes under the name Sade Sathi. The period is notorious for the evils that shall be produced in many cases. In the life of a person, the cycle may occur once, twice, or thrice according as the person is short-lived, medium or long-lived. In the first cycle, the evil effects shall be effectively felt by parents and near relatives, in the family. In the second cycle the evils shall be concentrated on the domestic and personal fields of the person. During the third cycle, it affects one's children, health and may even cause death."*

* "Jupiter", *What the Stars Foretell.*

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